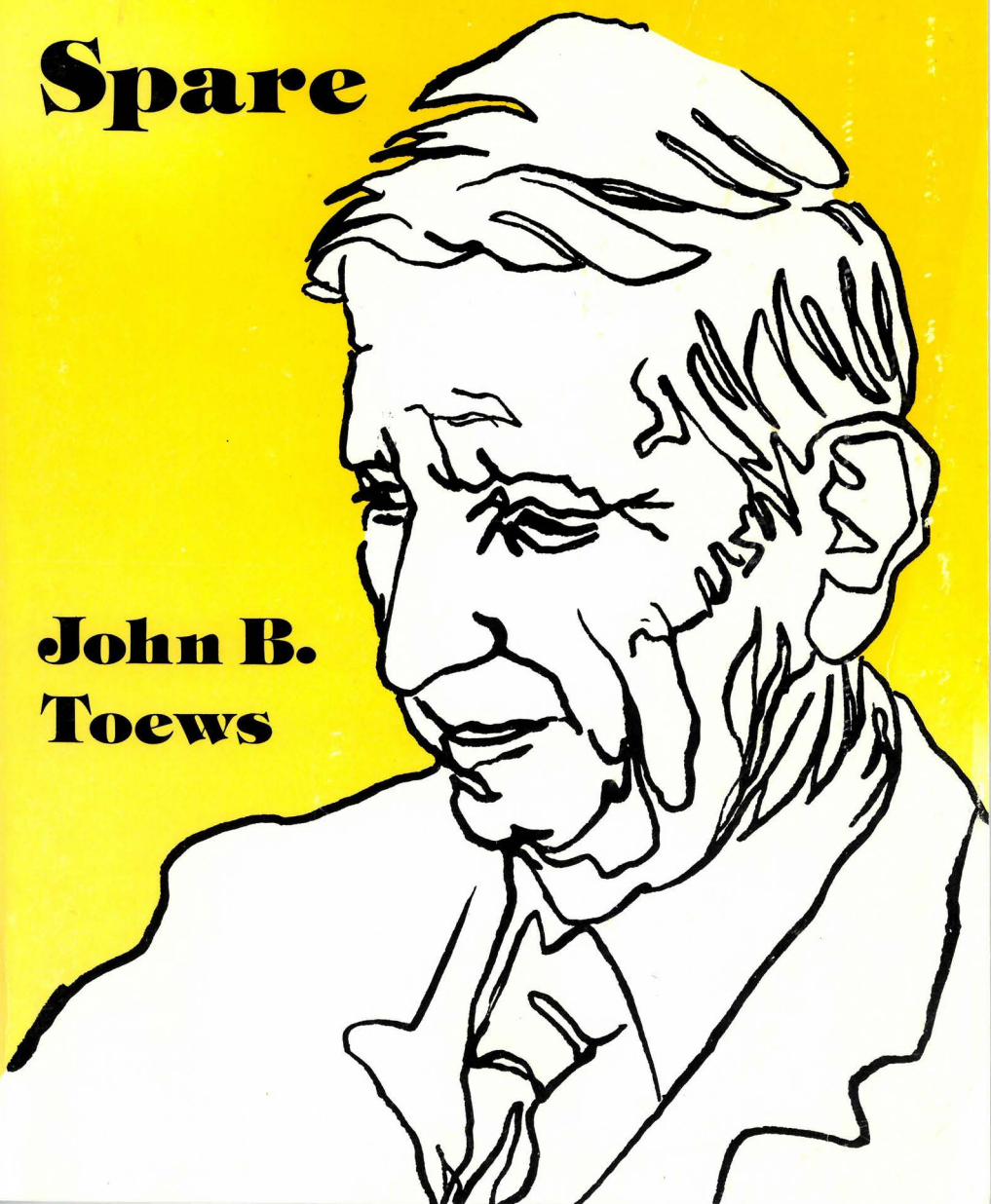


# **With Courage to Spare**

**John B.  
Toews**







# WITH COURAGE TO SPARE

The Life of B. B. Janz (1877-1964)

BY

JOHN B. TOEWS

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## FOREWORD

The contribution of B. B. Janz to Mennonites by giving them leadership in their resettlement from Russia to Canada in the 1920's is major indeed. His spiritual leadership within the Mennonite Brethren Church has been bold. Legends are apt to grow up about men as singular as B. B. Janz. In this volume historian John B. Toews offers a helpful, inspiring and historical perspective on Janz's life.

Author Toews, currently professor in the department of history at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, is well-versed in the story of the Mennonites. His book, *Lost Fatherland*, tells the story of the exodus of the Mennonite group from Russia. He is contributor to professional journals of history. He has lectured at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas; Pacific College, Fresno, California; and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California. As one who has been raised for part of his life in the environs of southern Alberta, the home of B. B. Janz, he writes with a personal knowledge of the life in the communities and church groups in which Janz moved.

We are pleased to release this biography of B. B. Janz. It makes a significant contribution to an understanding of both a man and a period of our history.

Board of Christian Literature  
General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches

## PREFACE

A biography is never the full measure of a man. All too often he looms larger than life. Changing times are seen only through his eyes and events are important only as he participates in them. He becomes the center of the community in which he lives, the obvious leader of every movement in which he participates. At times he typifies the people he leads, on other occasions he stands apart, unique and alone. As a leader he takes the heroic stance and initiates the necessary action. The men who worked with him are forgotten.

The biographer who sifts through a man's literary legacy for months and even years gradually undermines his own objectivity, becoming either increasingly critical or overly sympathetic. I remember Janz from my childhood standing before his large Coaldale congregation, offering long prayers at the close of the service. In later years he became a kind friend, always eager to know what was happening in my student world. It is fair to say that in those days I did not know who he was or what worlds he came from. His deep concern about recording his experiences for posterity only began to make sense after his death when I examined his letters and memoirs for the book, *LOST FATHERLAND*. That exposure determined my bias. Here was not only a man who personified the Russian Mennonite in his bearing and life style, but in his spirituality as well. Posterity must hear about this man: broadly as a type of international Mennonite, narrowly as a key formative force in the life of his own particular group.

Learning to know Janz was not easy. His work in administrative capacities was straightforward and readily understood. He obviously loved committees and actively tried to participate in them as long as he was able. After reading thousands of his letters, however, I concluded that Janz "the organization man" was not the true Janz. Though he shared the Russian Mennonite love for structure and was quite conscious of his role in Mennonite public life, committees were only a means to an end. He believed in the dynamic of a working brotherhood. A consensus achieved by the represen-



tatives of various groups working together was ample proof of the working of the Holy Spirit. The committee process was useful only as it served that end.

Janz accepted himself as the product of a small ethnic community and made no apologies for his limitations. Basic to his concern, however, was his special understanding of the Christian experience and its application to church and society. His people, and that is how he conceived of them, remained a mere religious minority unless they found new life and applied it in everyday affairs. Here was the dividing line between church and ethnic community. Without knowledge of this stance it is difficult to interpret the voluminous legacy Janz left behind. He knew little Anabaptist history, yet vigorously promoted virtually every facet of his heritage.

It was essential, I felt, to concentrate on Janz's formative years, his personal life experiences, his role as community leader, and finally his focus on broader Anabaptist-Mennonite concerns: church and state; nonresistance; the nature of the church. Sometimes the sources seemed overabundant. It became difficult to "make a long story short"; to explain complex situations in a few lines; to discard the many index cards with their added information and crucial insights; to discard the many apt quotations so characteristic of the man. It was also difficult to adequately translate Janz's unique modes of thought and expression. At times he employed obscure imagery and understatement. He could describe a situation perfectly and at length without ever specifying what it was. Such letters were difficult to understand and equally difficult to translate. On the whole the translations tend to be rather free.

One type of information was not easy to incorporate into the narrative. Russian Mennonites tended to complement, characterize and at time criticize their leaders through the anecdote. In the course of my interviews many kind people told me many stories about Janz. Perhaps they will be disappointed that their story does not appear in the book. They should remember it was also told by others and at times by documents from the very time of the episode itself. Often such accounts did not tell the whole story or represented a one-sided encounter. I tried to use them in the context of all the information available. In my estimation B. B. Janz was probably one of the "best documented" Russian Mennonite

leaders of recent times, especially since both the Russian and Canadian materials survived intact.

I should like to express my appreciation to a number of individuals for their advice and help. A thank you to the members of the Janz family for their candidness, especially Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thiessen, who provided detailed accounts of Janz's last years. Janz's brother Jacob (deceased) and his two sisters, Margarita (deceased) and Helena, supplied valuable information on the history of the family, the character of their parents and the nature of their home life. Personal friends of Janz, like J. J. Thiessen of Saskatoon, C. A. DeFehr of Winnipeg and A.A. Wiens of Abbotsford, gave their personal assessment of Janz's inner dynamic, of his aims and motives. The book could not have been written without those insights. There are of course the archivists, those kind people in Winnipeg, Hillsboro, and Fresno, who entrusted their material to me and patiently waited for its return. Thanks also to Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa., for allowing some of the things already said in LOST FATHERLAND to be said again.

John B. Toews

January 15, 1978





# *Chapter I*

## *Formative Years*

The last eulogies were spoken and the last prayers said. Silently the mourners assembled in the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church filed out and followed the casket to the nearby cemetery. In the late afternoon of an October day the coffin was closed and slowly lowered into the ground. Perhaps the funeral was not all that sad. The man, after all, had reached eighty-seven and had not died forgotten. Many came to pay their last respects. All present were told of his dedication, service, accomplishments—and the elderly remembered, but for the young he was a man of another generation, language and culture. They came to bury a venerable old man. They did not understand his world nor how their own was intertwined with it. He served his people well and his deeds were heroic. But what did all this matter in 1964? A patriarch was laid to rest and with him the experiences his lifespan encompassed. Certainly at the time of his death B. B. Janz was a man of another era. But could the past, especially his past, be so frivolously discarded and forgotten? Who was this Janz?

Surviving family records go back to the late eighteenth century when his ancestors lived in the Driesen-Schwetz Mennonite settlement in Prussia.<sup>1</sup> At least this was where great-grandfather Tobias Cornelius Jantz (changed to Janz in the 1920's) was born in 1783 and spent his childhood and youth. As a young man he was caught in the fervor of Mennonite eastward migration and left Prussia in 1807 to settle in the village of Karolswalde, near the city of Ostroga in the province of Volhynia in Polish-Russia. The following year he married Susanna Unruhen. Eleven children were born to this union, of which Benjamin Tobias Janz, the seventh child born in 1821, was destined to become B. B. Janz's grandfather. In 1840 he married the daughter of the Mennonite elder

in Karolswalde, Maria Dirks. She died in 1850 leaving him with four children. He subsequently married Eva Block, also of Karolswalde. B. B. Janz's father Benjamin B., was the eldest of five children born to this union.

Who were the Benjamin Tobias Janz's in the 1850's? Available documents suggest the family lived perilously close to the borderline of poverty. On a small acreage comprising three desiatines (1 des. = 2.7 acres) Janz tried to raise the essential foodstuffs for this family. His weaving expertise on the handloom produced some income, while day labor supplied additional funds. The family's lifestyle was simple. Everyday clothes were homespun and handsewn, only Sunday clothes were made from purchased cloth. Long hours of hard labor barely provided the most basic diet. Most meals consisted of brown bread, soup or potatoes. Poverty made itself felt in another area. Janz could not even send his children to elementary school for any length of time. At best each of them spent one winter in school and perhaps learned to read. His son Benjamin, for example, only learned to read, then in later years taught himself to write. Three of the Janz children, in a desperate search for economic survival, migrated to the United States right after their marriage.

Seeking to better his fortunes Benjamin Tobias left Karolswalde and rented some 30 *Morgen* of land (a morgen is slightly more than 2 acres) for a few years, but then returned and purchased a farm. It was all to no avail. Economic conditions worsened for both Janz and his fellow Mennonites in the Ostroga settlement. Many of the colonists migrated to America, the rest left for the Molochnaya settlement in South Russia. B. T. Janz arrived there in 1875 and purchased a farm in the village of Contentiusfeld for 1,400 rubles. Some twelve or thirteen years later he retired, sold the farm and spent his last years in a small cottage at the edge of the village, busy at his handloom. He died of tuberculosis in 1889 at the age of 68.

Simplicity characterized his life style. Though he enjoyed a touch of prosperity during his last years in Contentiusfeld, his dress mode and appearance remained that of a Volhynian peasant. Contrary to prevailing styles he wore his hair long, combed back and cut straight at the lower neck. In front it fell just above his eyebrows and hung long at the sides, almost framing his face in rectangular fashion. The villagers knew Benjamin as a contented, happy man who usually sang to break the monotony of long hours at the loom. And why



shouldn't he sing, he was after all the precentor (*Vorsaenger*) in the local church.

Benjamin's piety was also unembellished. He was deeply content with his lot in life. If this was what God intended for him, why shouldn't he live joyfully. Only one of his spiritual practices appeared austere. He fasted every Friday. When the eldest son asked for the reason he replied, "You don't know, Benjamin, how well one prays Friday evening when the flesh has been quieted and the soul has become so light." We know little else of his piety, except that young Benjamin felt it worth imitating.

When Benjamin Tobias and his fellow villagers arrived in the Molochnaya in 1875 they brought with them certain traditions and attitudes uniquely their own. Compared with the South Russian farms, their landholdings were small. All their striving in Polish-Russia, however energetic, added little to their possessions. On the whole they were not materialistic. Unlike their more capitalistic brothers in the Molochnaya they knew of no bitter quarrel between the landed and the landless. Their homes and farmyards had been modest. All the buildings, including church and school, were built of rough-hewn or sawed beams, the roofs consisting of thatched straw. While in Volhynia the Ostroga Mennonites experienced little innovation in agriculture. In spring a single share plow drawn by two horses turned the soil. Crops were sown by hand and the land harrowed. In the fall the grain was cut by sickle, bound into sheaves, and later threshed with the flail, for even threshing stones were unknown. It was not surprising that crop yields barely sufficed to meet basic needs. By contrast, many farmers in the Molochnaya utilized grass mowers, selftying binders, threshing machines, and stationary steam engines by 1880.

Culturally and religiously B. B. Janz's grandfather was heir to a more conservative tradition than that he encountered in the Molochnaya. His life in Karolswalde centered about a small, self-contained community which evolved its own norms and held to them in a rather uncompromising fashion. Historic Mennonitism naturally played a role in formulating the content of those norms. Nonresistance and nonconformity were of basic importance. In the closed village setting, however, nonconformity was defined in terms of external forms and any innovation was regarded with suspicion. As a consequence there was little change in hair and clothing styles.

On one occasion the elder refused to baptize some of the young people who returned from the Molochnaya wearing the latest fashions. Similarly music and song were carefully regulated. In one instance a minister was deposed from office for playing a secular tune on his flute. Anyone purchasing an accordion was excommunicated. Drunkenness, card playing, dancing, moral offences and theft were severely punished.

The ban was frequently used to correct erring parishioners. In its mildest form it required the guilty party to sit on a special designated bench for several Sundays in succession, during which he was publicly admonished from the pulpit. More severe forms of the ban involved exclusion from the congregation and as a last resort, separation from the immediate family. Central to the maintenance of Christian morality and public order was the elder of the local congregation. His authority was such that even appeals against his judgment to regional officials were rarely successful.

For the Karolswalde inhabitants church and state had merged into one. The villagers were the church—all of them. They regarded the prevailing “don’ts” as a valid expression of their nonconformity with the world and experienced no real sense of confinement and restriction as a result. There were celebrations—sad and happy ones—which brought the community together and strengthened its sense of belonging. A wedding generated considerable pomp and levity, the event lasting two days, with only the morning of the first reserved for the actual wedding ceremony. The rest of the time was given to celebration. Wedding meals consisted of beef or beer soup with wine or beer as the standard beverage. Enterprising young folk forbidden to dance at the wedding itself by the elder on occasion selected neighboring houses or even villages for that purpose. Naturally those caught in such transgressions would expect severe chastisement.

Two things probably determined the character of Benjamin Tobias’ life experience: the community in which he lived and the means by which he sustained himself—agriculture. Karolswalde was geographically and culturally isolated from the other Mennonite settlements in Russia. Together with the rest of the villages in the Ostroga settlement it became self-contained and developed its own folkways. Villagers possessed a limited awareness of the outside world and rarely traveled beyond the confines of their colonies. Culturally their

horizon did not go beyond the hymns and simplistic liturgy of their church services. The religious and social life of the community, presided over by conservative elders, allowed little novelty. Nothing ever changed in Karolswalde!

For Benjamin Tobias there were redeeming factors. His piety, though encompassed by formalized religion, radiated profound faith in God and joy in living. He lived close to the land. The horse, the plow, the sower spreading his seed, the sickle, sheaves and flail—the pattern of his agricultural life was simple. Amid this simplicity was a profound understanding of life's basic issues. Living consisted more of the small joys and routine tasks than the lure of efficient production and large scale farming. He was content with little. Perhaps this was his noblest legacy to his posterity.

Poverty was a constant guest in the B. T. Janz household. His son, Benjamin, ate mainly potatoes, flour, soup, and black bread. Long hours of hard work were needed to ensure even this meager fare. At first he assisted his father at the loom. Then, like many boys in the village, he shepherded the family flock, living a rather idyllic, carefree life. Economic pressures limited Benjamin's formal schooling to one year. It was not a happy experience, since school hours were long, discipline extremely severe and rote memorization the only accepted learning method. The building was austere, its furnishings were sparse and teaching materials almost nonexistent. That Benjamin even learned to read was more a tribute to his native ability than to the prevailing pedagogical skills.

In his teens B. B. Janz's father already accepted the responsibilities of adulthood. He worked as a day labourer in the hay and grain fields of the landed estates bordering Karolswalde. In winter he sawed lumber in forests owned by the regional nobility. His homemade clothing was incapable of adequately protecting him against the winter cold, just as was the crude barrack erected to provide housing for the forestry workers. But such hardship had its rewards. Physically Benjamin developed into a sturdy young man, capable of sustained hard labour and largely immune to extremes of heat and cold. Years later on the Canadian prairies his grandsons often marvelled how well he survived the rigors of winter without gloves. Meanwhile, the promise of better wages and working conditions in the Molochnaya settlement induced many young men from the Ostroga colonies to migrate. Among those who left in 1873 was Benjamin B. Janz. At first



An early photograph of the Benjamin B. Janz family. Young B. B. Janz stands at the back between his parents.

he worked as a stablehand in Halbstadt, then as a farm labourer in Conteniusfeld. It was in this village that his parents purchased a farm consisting of 32.5 desiatines in 1875.<sup>2</sup>

On December 2, 1876, Benjamin married Helene Penner, the eldest daughter of a small farmer in the village of Pastva. Her childhood had been more difficult than Benjamin's. At an early age she already accepted responsibility for the care of her younger brothers and sisters. When she was thirteen her mother died. Not long after, she was sent as a domestic to work in the wealthier homes of the region. Working conditions were frequently most unpleasant, the hours were long and the pay very low. As a sensitive teenager she grew up without a

confident or friend. She became guarded and aloof towards others, perhaps to protect herself from further hurts. The hardships of youth had their compensations. Helene developed into a determined young lady with an iron will to succeed. Mennonite society had treated her as a servant girl. Helene rightfully felt she was more than that, and perhaps unconsciously set out to prove it.

The young couple lived with Benjamin's parents for several months after their wedding. Then they purchased a small farm and windmill at the eastern end of Conteniusfeld. Initially life was difficult. Their only furniture consisted of a bed, table, bench and chest. Benjamin borrowed horses and implements from his father in order to plant the first crop. Between seeding and harvest he left Conteniusfeld to work as a carpenter in the various villages. During this interval, except for weekends, Helene managed the farm alone. Years of service on large estates had taught her invaluable management skills. Energetic and resolute she worked long hours at her tasks. In money matters her thrift provided an excellent counterbalance to Benjamin, whose generosity to others, especially when milling grain, often overextended the family budget. Helene's frugality was supplemented by her husband's skill as a craftsman. Benjamin made most of the essential household and farming inventory—bowls, tables, chairs, a wagon, a plow, barrels and even harnesses.

Life for Helene became more complex with the birth of two sons, Benjamin and Henry, in 1877 and 1879. Now she had to cope with two active youngsters as well as the farm! There were moments of desperation. Even the calmest cow would not tolerate the screams and shenanigans of the two during milking. Helene's solution was simple. She placed them in empty barrels. Then, while their reverberating howls filled the air, she finished the evening chores.

As her family grew Helene did what she could to provide a secure, well-regulated home for her children. She instilled in them a healthy work ethic and a strong sense of self-discipline. Religiously Helene was raised in the liturgical forms of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Once they had settled in Conteniusfeld, the Janz's drove the five miles to the Rudnerweide church at least once a month. Helene found its orthodoxy best suited her tastes. God was best served by formal worship and strict obedience to His moral laws. It was

not surprising that the Janz home stressed an adherence to external religious forms. Ironically, the pietistic and informal Mennonite Brethren ultimately exerted the strongest religious influence upon Helene. During a grave illness the counsel of a Brethren minister in the village led to her conversion. Then, too, since no General Conference Church existed in Conteniusfeld, the family often attended the local Brethren congregation. Father Benjamin was even inclined to join, but Helene resisted. For her, baptism had a sacramental quality and could not be repeated. As long as the Mennonite Brethren made that a condition of membership she refused to join.

A turning point in Benjamin's religious life came with the death of one of his sons. In later years he told his son Jacob the following story: <sup>3</sup>

After I had been married eight or nine years I still had considerable economic difficulties. Every week during the summer I worked elsewhere as a carpenter. When I came home for Sunday and walked about the farm I noticed many things which needed attending to. As I thought of being gone again and of the coming harvest I became concerned about how I would manage everything. Frequently I worked at unobtrusive tasks on Sunday morning. Often my wife came and reminded me of our wedding pledge to keep morning and evening vespers. She requested I at least read something from the "Book" on Sundays. I usually replied, "It's good for you to talk, the creditors do not come to you but to me for their money. If I don't get things done now, they'll remain undone." In my work as a carpenter I neglected prayer more and more. Then God intervened. We had two boys, Benjamin and Henry. The first was physically weak and was not a very promising help for the future. By contrast, Henry was a strong, well-built boy. Simply stated, Henry was my pride; my soul clung to that boy! Then one morning shortly before the harvest he became ill. In the evening the doctor was called. He diagnosed a very serious case of croup. Next morning the child was dead. Much parental joy and hope was buried with him. Then we began to realize that the Lord's hand had come over us . . . I repented of my laxness in prayer and took refuge in God. . . . We resolved to serve the Lord more faithfully from now on.



The home left its mark on young Benjamin. A small farm and a mill ensured a subsistence, and gradually all the debts were paid off. In everyday terms, however, this meant sustained hard work, especially for the eldest son. Mother Janz ruled her household with a firm hand. She believed in discipline and order. Every duty required a conscientious, exacting fulfillment. Nor were the obligations towards God neglected. Religion played a strong role in the family. Its guidelines were narrow and rather severely applied—piety meant a conformity to certain norms, and in Contentiusfeld these were clearly specified. In the Janz home, however, contentment and generosity more than compensated for strictness. Father Janz was never beset by a consuming passion for earthly riches. He was satisfied as long as the farm and mill provided a living. More frequently than Helene approved, he forgave the debts of poor villagers who had borrowed flour from him. He never demanded retribution from employees who occasionally stole grain from the mill.<sup>4</sup> His son Benjamin exhibited traits of both parents—the rigidity and discipline of his mother and the broad ranging sympathies of his father.

In the opinion of most villagers, and father Janz agreed with them, the Lord's Day allowed no robust activity. Sunday meant a day spent quietly at home. Special family excursions were rare. But the dictates of religion failed to contain the exuberance of boyhood. One fine Sunday afternoon young Benjamin Janz and his companions crossed the Kuruschan creek near his home. In the shelter of a tall lilac they formed a tight circle and lit their first cigarettes. For the moment, regardless of what their tearfilled eyes and coughing suggested, all had reached manhood. The evening chores ended the daring exploit. As was custom in most of the Russian Mennonite villages, the same roof covered house and barn. Young Janz had just begun his evening work when mother, carrying his Sunday clothes, appeared in the doorway separating the two buildings.

Where have you been today?"

"Oh, here and there!"

"Look," she continued holding up Benjamin's Sunday pants.

Horror of horrors—the cigarette had burned a hole through his pocket.

"What if I tell father?"

"No mother, don't!"

"I don't know if I can keep silent."

"Don't tell mother, please. I'll never do it again."

Mother was still not convinced and felt father should know. His punishment was something to reckon with.

"If I promise never to do it again will you still tell father?"

For a moment she gazed at the trembling boy, then turned and left. The young lad spent the evening in fear and anxiety. Nothing happened. Days passed, and still no retribution. He had promised never to smoke again and he kept the pledge.<sup>5</sup>

Since church was five miles distant Sundays usually meant a simple religious service in the Janz home. Traditionally a lengthy portion from the printed sermons of the German pietist Ludwig Hofacker was read and one or two hymns from the **Dreiband**\* sung. The melody, "O For a Thousand Tongues To Sing," had a special appeal for father Janz, perhaps because he had difficulty keeping any other tune. Most of the hymns in the *Dreiband*, he felt, were suitable for its melody. The situation became singularly distressing to Benjamin, now accustomed to singing chorales at school. One Sunday he refused to join in the family hymn.

"Benjamin, sing with us!"

But Benjamin sullenly ignored his father's plea. More admonishment, but still no response. When family worship ended, father conducted his son to the silo, a traditional site for dealing with disobedience. Expecting the worst the boy burst into tears, but to his astonishment he saw his father weeping, then unexpectedly kneeling on the straw. A loud prayer informed God of Benjamin's obstinance. The rod was spared. Henceforth he sang all songs to his father's favorite melody.<sup>6</sup>

Benjamin learned about kneeling on one other occasion. Before he left for high school (Zentralschule) in Gnadenfeld his father knelt with him once more, imploring God's grace for his son. He had good reason to. In the 1890's almost no one in the village went beyond elementary school. Young Janz's decision to enter high school caused considerable consternation, but to the elder Janz, deprived of even an elementary education in his youth, Benjamin's plans were most acceptable. After all,

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\*The traditional Russian Mennonite hymnal comprised of three former hymnals, **Frohe Botschaft**, **Glaubensstimme**, and **Heimatklaenge**.



The Benjamin B. and Helene Janz family before W.W.I. l. to r. Jacob and Agnes Janz, Benjamin and Maria Janz, Helene Janz Sn., Helene Janz, Benjamin Janz Sn., John and Margareta Toews, Peter and Maria Rahn, David Dürksen, son of Helene's late sister.

his son's delicate and fragile physique probably made him incapable of operating the family farm and mill. Then, too, the village school teacher had been impressed by Benjamin's academic abilities and advised further education. Fortunately, the Gnadenfeld High School extended a loan of 150 rubles per year, which ensured three years of concentrated study.<sup>7</sup>

Janz's high school years (1892-95) marked his first steps toward independence. Once in Gnadenfeld he shared a large room with almost a dozen students. After school hours his "dormitory" was unsupervised. Serious study was out of the question for all except young Benjamin. He was not gregarious. Impervious to taunts and ridicule, he plugged his ears and conscientiously pursued a book in some corner. He soon developed a reputation for honesty and persistence. Quarrels were often resolved with, "Ask little Janz, he'll tell you the truth."<sup>8</sup> A classmate and later Mennonite elder, Jacob Janzen, recalls a snowball fight on the Gnadenfeld school grounds. The losers expediently retired to safer territory, except for "little Janz" who stood his ground, undaunted by the volley directed towards him.<sup>9</sup>



**B. B. Janz's parents, Benjamin B. and Helene Janz in the 1920s.**

## *Chapter II*

### *"You Are Free"*

In high school young Janz decided to become a teacher, which normally meant further training at the Mennonite Teacher's College in Halbstadt. Benjamin Sr., after some local consultation, decided his son did not need the extra training. Furthermore, as a small landowner, tuition costs were too high for him. Barred from further study, only one alternative remained for Janz. High school graduates were permitted to teach the elementary grades in village schools and so, concurring with his father's wishes, the young high school graduate sought a position.

In the summer of 1896 he accepted a teaching position in the small Mennonite village of Yalantusch in the Crimea. Late that summer he injured his knee in a fall from a horse and arrived at his new position four weeks late. Immediately the young teacher plunged into his work and almost as quickly experienced a deep sense of frustration. Characteristically writing in the third person, Janz described his experience in later years.

His inability to perform satisfactorily in school brought him total bankruptcy. There followed an earnest prayer that his labor in school might be fruitful. Never before had a need made him so dependent on God. This struggle intensified. There he stood, helpless, until the thought flashed through his mind, "You desire God to help you in your school crisis, but you refuse to do what God wants of you, namely come to him with your lost life and receive renewal!"<sup>1</sup>

The crisis intensified. Desperately Janz began to search for truth by reading the Scriptures. Additional help came from an unexpected source. The caretaker lived in a wing adjoining the school building. A deeply religious man, thoroughly acquainted

with the Bible, he counseled the young teacher as best he could. Throughout fall and early winter he continued his search. As the son of parents accustomed to the traditional liturgical forms of the Mennonite Church, Janz not surprisingly developed a concern about the mode of baptism. During his youth the topic had been raised in the village by members of the Mennonite Brethren Church and had generated considerable debate. His study of the question before his conversion led him to view immersion as the correct mode of baptism. He never changed his mind. Later in life he recalled his interest in this question.

He himself was not entirely clear on the question of the new life, hence he had no need of baptism. But now he diligently searched the Scriptures, whereas previously he read every book but the Bible. Before the answer (to the question) emerged, however, he was struck by John 3:23, which made it clear why much water was needed. Years later Hebrews 10:22 was added.<sup>2</sup>

The summer of 1896 found Janz at home on the farm where the pressures of daily labor momentarily interrupted his religious quest. In fall he returned to Yalantusch. Now the personal crisis reached its most critical stage. His study of the Scriptures intensified, but the truth eluded him. Even a religious revival in the village left him untouched.

Within the teacher everything remained dark. The finest verses of promise were of no avail, acceptance by faith was lacking. Late one Saturday evening Isaiah chapter 43 spoke clearly and penetratingly. "Yes, but who will tell me that this is my personal possession? How lovely for those who are accepted, but you are not, you simply have nothing. This very night the matter must be resolved. If you totally commit yourself in prayer and struggle, something great will happen." The struggle for the forgiveness of all sin became more and more difficult, but the lips would not utter the word of total surrender. Something demanded postponement, even if for several hours. This (total surrender) was the most difficult battle to win—to be or not to be. Finally, the prodigal son broke through the barrier. With repeated promises of self-surrender, he waited with anticipation but nothing happened inwardly or outwardly. Must not He, the Lord and Savior, answer? And again and again confession and self-surrender and



Isaiah 43:25. . . . There was no response from above. The sinner finally went to bed confused and disappointed. In this state he arose on Sunday morning. Again, he read Isaiah 43.<sup>3</sup>

At breakfast Janz's host, Henry Dueck, aware of his inner crisis, asked, "Well, teacher, are you happy already?" The teacher answered negatively.

"How can that be?" Mrs. Dueck kindly enquired. "The Harder girls, Peter, the Koops—all have become happy people!"

"Well, God has more problems with educated people," Janz thought to himself. Audibly he mentioned reading Isaiah 43. "Let's read it right now," enjoined Mr. Dueck. When the reading was completed he remarked, "The entire chapter is so beautiful. What more do you want?" Janz did not answer. Walking back to his place of residence Dueck's question remained in his mind. "What more do you want?"

That morning he made his way to a small lay service held in the village. At Janz's request someone read Isaiah 43. As the young teacher listened he thought, "Yes, at the cross He had trouble and pain with your sins. The price does not have to be paid today. Your sins were already taken away at that time—it was all completed long ago. You are free! Then thank God for your redemption!"

Of this experience Janz writes:

What boundless happiness now filled a heart so plagued for many months. A flood of emotion overwhelmed the heart, but no word was uttered about this change—salvation had been imparted. More people entered and he (Janz) was obliged to move forward. Of the sermon he remembered nothing. When the service came to a close his soul felt so overwhelmed that the shy young man acknowledged his Savior in personal prayer and thanked Him out of the depths of his being. He had had no plan or thought of doing this and was surprised at himself—what had he done?<sup>4</sup>

How ironic! Personal prayers were not in fashion and public prayers were reserved for the ministers and elders of the Church. As a young student he often ridiculed the family maid for attending the prayer meetings of the Mennonite Brethren. Now on January 19, 1897, he had done the same, and even prayed! After several weeks his inner joy was gradually eroded

by the monotony of the everyday. What had happened? Had he sinned? Was he still converted or had everything been lost? When elder Dyck asked him about his soul's welfare during a pastoral visit, he only nodded—to affirm verbally might have been a lie. Deep doubts filled Jantz's mind when the visitor left. Another minister who visited Janz, sensing his unbelief, left with the words, "I am perplexed by you; I don't understand you any more!" Weeks passed and nothing changed.

One Saturday he visited an elderly villager. There was little conversation. Janz's eye fell on a small songbook *Frohe Botschaft (Glad Tidings)*. Mechanically he opened it. There were the words:

Simply trusting every day  
Trusting through a stormy way  
Even when my faith is small  
Trusting Jesus, that is all. <sup>5</sup>

How was this possible? Trusting in all circumstances? This was new to Janz. A feeling of happiness was not necessarily a sign of true faith. It was the Word—not personal feelings. "Glaube nur" (only believe)—how incredibly simple! He read the song a second and third time. Here was the best sermon he had ever heard! He walked back to his school. No longer was there any doubt, nor would there be until his death sixty-seven years later.

Several months passed. The young Christian conscientiously confessed his faults to those he had offended before his conversion. Now came the issue of baptism. Of its necessity there was no doubt, but where and how were complex questions. He decided to join the Mennonite Brethren in the Crimea, which baptized only by immersion. Dutifully he informed his parents of his intentions. Mother's return letter was direct and to the point.

We welcome your conversion to the Lord with open arms. But the fact that you wish to be baptized by the Brethren in the Crimea is another matter. If there is no other way it can take place here. If you do it there you are a disobedient son. <sup>6</sup>

Sister Margareta also sent a note: "When I am baptized I will be converted as well as you and will get to heaven as sure as you, but I will not hurt my parents by allowing myself to be

baptized in the river.”<sup>7</sup> Janz postponed further action until his return home.

A sense of reserve greeted Janz once he arrived home in Conteniusfeld. Some time elapsed before the question of baptism was openly discussed. Father said little, but mother found it difficult to hide her feelings. She had always wished to live in harmony and love with her children and together with them approach the Lord's Table. Now this deep rift. Could he not serve God in the Mennonite Conference? Benjamin argued that family love and affection did not depend on church affiliation. Usually at this point Mother's tears ended the dialogue. By August (1897) all arrangements for baptism were complete. After the customary *Aussprache* (public sharing of one's conversion) in the Alexandertal Mennonite Brethren Church, baptism in the Yuschanlee river followed. Janz walked towards the water with his mother. Someone asked if she was happy about Benjamin's baptism. "Bringing him to the cemetery would not be as difficult as this," she retorted. For her, baptism by immersion meant the loss of her son. Eventually the rest of her children followed their brother's example. Once in Canada the elder Janz's both attended the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, but neither joined it, since that meant rebaptism. Such a future perspective was of little help on that August 8, 1897, and Janz stepped into the Yuschanlee very much alone.<sup>8</sup>

Two life-long character traits clearly surfaced during Janz's drawnout conversion experience: his integrity and tenacity. As long as his inner crisis remained unresolved he determinedly continued his quest. When the first joy of his salvation experience faded he searched for a sounder basis for his commitment. Then he unflinchingly accepted the consequences of his decision—even if it meant baptism by immersion without parental consent. As the months of uncertainty passed and the counsel of others failed he made no attempt to hide his problem. He spoke of his experience of joy when it came and kept silent when it vanished. Once convinced of the reality of his faith he plunged resolutely into the active life of the church.

The nature of Janz's conversion directly influenced his later concept of the salvation experience. In describing his lengthy spiritual crisis Janz frequently spoke of being "in conversion" (*in Bekehrung*), since in his experience it was a gradual process of enlightenment culminating with the assurance of

salvation. His rebirth was difficult, prolonged and intensely personal. Though set amid local religious ferment, it was quietistic, with little external emotionalism. Answers, however self-evident to others, emerged slowly and were cautiously internalized. Janz conceived of the key process as an intense search of the Scriptures. Little wonder that mass evangelism as he later observed it in Canada and the United States appeared too easy and too superficial. In his search for truth the authority of Scripture, not the words of men, played a dominant role. It was essential to comprehend its message and accept all of its implications individually and without external pressure.

Janz's conversion and the circumstances amid which it occurred affected his thinking on the nature of the Christian life. A simple and strict religious life style prevailed in the home. Strong ethical preaching at formalized Sunday services further reinforced his sensitive conscience. Religious as he was, conversion brought with it an intense repentance characterized by a deep sense of sinfulness. For a long period Isaiah 43 with its stress on guilt and atonement occupied his mind. A moral, respectable and well-trained young man was overwhelmed by the depth of his own depravity. As a result Janz's sense of right and wrong, exacting as it was before his conversion, became even more so afterwards.

There was another reason why his concept of the Christian life allowed for little novelty. Janz was born into an ethnic group with rather precisely defined values. When his forefathers came to Russia they were able to establish a self-contained life that merged Mennonite society and Mennonite faith into one. Mennonitism in the Russian setting, religious or civil, involved the entire community. The end result wasn't all bad, for religion made itself felt in such areas as mutual aid, insurance and social welfare institutions. It also produced a strong awareness of public morality. Young Janz typified one of the better end products of the Russian Mennonite ethnic group.

Yet being a Christian in a cultural and social sense did not satisfy him, even though he exhibited all the virtues demanded by conventional Mennonitism. He was convinced that every Mennonite needed conversion, but that conversion still left him a Mennonite. By birth and upbringing Janz's world was the Mennonite world, but once a Christian he distinguished between a Mennonite and a Mennonite-Christian



B. B. Janz in 1896 and 1914

lifestyle. In later years his personal ethics always remained demanding, but he never withdrew from service in a Mennonite world whose standards may have appeared less rigorous than his own.

Janz's new birth experience in part explains his later loyalty to the Mennonite Brethren Church. His own pilgrimage convinced him that the Christian forms which traditional Mennonitism tried to uphold did not guarantee a genuine Christian experience. Since his conversion was highly subjective in character, he naturally associated with a group where evidence of personal new life was mandatory for church membership. For him the selective brotherhood was preferable to the cultural-religious church into which he had been born. He rejected an institutional church lax in its moral demands and discipline, tied to society and presided over by an ecclesiastical officialdom.

In Janz's own experience obedience to tradition and adherence to form did not bring spiritual vitality. By contrast he saw in the Mennonite Brethren Church of his day a voluntary body of believers, practising radical ethics, strong discipline and fostering the study and preaching of the Scriptures. Its simple services, aggressive outreach and non-

conformity attracted young Janz and made him willing to risk parental censure when joining it. Reflecting on the Mennonite Brethren Church of that day some sixty years later he wrote:

I was accepted into the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1897. In those years I visited many a church. I received a distinct impression of its character: of brotherly fellowship; fear of God; a healthy appetite for the Word; of a sincere, quickening preaching; of work with the faltering one and of the treatment of the unrepentant sinner in the church. Growth in the church came much more from the outside than via the children of the church members. Whether old or young, the church member generally had a burden for the unconverted of the area and for his relatives. They usually believed a man was lost without conversion. Conferences did not struggle about the basis of faith or ethics so that the church at home re-echoed the shout of battle. This unanimity and unity . . . had the respect of all upright men, especially the God-fearing Mennonites who desired new life, or others that already possessed it and lamented that their churches were so far removed from this in faith, conduct and practice. Here in the fellowship of the Mennonite Brethren Church they could find what their heart had always desired. . . . There was life and activity without a Bible school (often with a very weak Sunday school) and with rarely a high school, not even to speak of a college. There was no proselytizing by pressuring for children's conversion. The young people accepted the direction, order, customs and practices of the church without criticism. This was the way it should be, and they followed obediently without much fuss at weddings, without retreats and camp meetings. With no special youth conferences they were nevertheless modest, devout and loyal. . . . Scorn, ridicule, insinuations, expulsion from the family, marital scenes, expulsion of preachers and lashings—all this was part of the scene, but there were also extra-ordinary conversions. That is how I found the Mennonite Brethren Church sixty years ago. . . .<sup>9</sup>

After his baptism Janz became actively involved in the Sparrau Mennonite Brethren Church. He first joined the choir, then helped in Sunday school and eventually preached on Sunday mornings. Meanwhile he continued his teaching

career. Through extra studying Janz was able to obtain his final certification as a teacher. Each summer, however, he returned to help his father on the farm.

In 1900 Janz accepted a position as tutor on a large Mennonite estate near Kleefeld. Economically and socially the new setting contrasted sharply to impoverished Yalantusch. Religiously there were unexpected advantages. Bible studies, sometimes led by visiting ministers from Germany, were held on the large estates near Steinbach, Apanlee and Juschanlee. Janz frequently ministered at these meetings.

After serving three years as a private tutor on an estate Janz became principal of the village school of Sparrau. During this time he traveled to a teachers' conference held in the Memrik settlement. When an elder colleague, Tobias Voth, asked him why he had not yet married Janz replied: "I haven't found a suitable person."

"I know of one," Voth retorted, "Maria Rogalsky."<sup>10</sup>

Appropriate introductions followed. Maria was attracted to her suitor, accepted his proposal and married him on September 25, 1905. In 1908 they left Sparrau for the village of Tiege, where Janz accepted a new teaching position. The neighboring villages of Tiege and Orloff together contained three Mennonite schools of some renown: a school for the Deaf in Tiege and a High School and Girls' School in Orloff. Once in Tiege Janz's involvement with the local church, contrary to his expectations, intensified. Widespread acceptance of his ministry led to his ordination on September 25, 1909. Not long after he was elected leader of the Brethren congregation in Tiege.

When the First World War broke out Janz, as a conscientious objector was drafted into the noncombatant service. The Czarist government allowed the Mennonites the privilege of fulfilling compulsory state service by working in either the Red Cross or the state forests. Janz went to the forestry station of Alt-Berdyansk. Here he was appointed in a supervisory capacity and allowed to carry on a chaplaincy work among the men. He returned to Tiege in 1917 and once more became a teacher and minister. With the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917 Janz's material circumstances worsened. At home five children needed food and clothing. Burdened with overwork, he became seriously ill. For a time it appeared that he might not recover. Gradually, as his

strength returned, he re-entered the life of the community. The illness marked a period of withdrawal and contemplation during which Janz consolidated his inner resources. Unknown to him at the time, his physical suffering became a prelude to the most difficult years of his life.



## *Chapter III*

### *"Dark As Night"*

Late in 1917 and early in 1918 nothing suggested an extraordinary role for Janz in the Russian Mennonite world. That world in fact was threatened with annihilation by the sequence of cataclysmic events generated by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War which followed. Initially the hardest hit were the Mennonite settlements in the Ukraine, since these lay directly in the path of the German armies sweeping into the Ukraine after signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918. They were again the scene of armed conflict in the bitter civil war which followed the German withdrawal. The final stages of the civil conflict between the Bolshevik and White armies devastated the settlements and left the colonists at the mercy of bandits, disease and famine. In addition to their physical suffering the Mennonites were confronted by a new order which economically, administratively and religiously opposed their traditional life style. Was there any role open to the Mennonites in the new Russia? Was it possible for the Mennonites to retain a sense of identity, or would they face forced assimilation? How would nationalization and the redivision of land as proposed by the new government influence the traditional lifestyle?

Such questions were already being raised while a more fundamental one, physical survival, predominated. Late in 1920 and in early 1921 the first great famine of the Soviet era struck the Ukraine. Under such disheartening circumstances the Mennonites began searching for solutions to their problems. From the onset their leaders recognized that the key to a retention of a Mennonite identity as it existed in the past lay in a significant contribution to the economic and agricultural reconstruction of the devastated Ukraine. But the agency which ultimately dealt with these issues initially emerged because of another concern.

In 1921 Mennonite young men, traditionally able to perform an alternative, non-military service to the state, were forcibly inducted into the Red Army in large numbers. In order to bring this problem to the attention of government authorities a special All-Mennonite Conference was called at Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, on February 19, 1921. Its convocation resulted in the organization of the Union of South Russian Mennonites. B. B. Janz was elected chairman. His task: to negotiate the release of Mennonite young men from the Red Army.<sup>1</sup> Unknown to him or the conference delegates, Janz would soon play a critical role in determining the destiny of his people.

A pacifist in the best Anabaptist tradition, Janz had serious concerns about the stance many Mennonites had taken during the period of civil anarchy a few years earlier. Late in 1918 the partisan band of Nestor Ivanovich Makhno conducted a reign of terror and plunder in a large area north of the Sea of Azov. In reaction to the prevailing civil unrest and lack of public safety a semi-military organization known as the *Selbstschutz* emerged in the Ukrainian Mennonite colonies. Inadvertently its military activity identified it with the White Army in the Russian Civil War and on one occasion fought with Red Army units.<sup>2</sup> Janz had been an unswerving opponent of the *Selbstschutz*, arguing it irreparably damaged the historical Mennonite peace witness. And now, as chairman of the new Union, Janz was to plead the cause of Mennonite pacifism before the Soviet regime. When the Alexanderwohl Convention was about to close the delegates were asked to reaffirm their belief in the principle of nonresistance. Before the vote was taken Janz requested the floor.

This assembly gives us the task to go and intercede before the Soviet government and insist that all Mennonite young men are nonresistant. But all of us and the government know what has happened through the *Selbstschutz*. It will be extremely difficult to assert that we are nonresistant. Furthermore, we ourselves do not know if we really endorse this view. Perhaps we want to assume such an attitude now, but if another situation develops we will shoot again. If we really want to adhere to nonviolence in the future, then now is the occasion to confess. What has happened has unfortunately happened, but we are sorry that it did. This must be settled here today.<sup>3</sup>



The B. B. Janz family in 1914.

If the delegates were not prepared to endorse pacificism he would not demand it. "But if this is the case," he continued, "I must resign from the leadership of the organization and request you to elect a new chairman." When the question was called for, the vote was unanimously affirmative. It was not the last time Janz demanded a decisive nonresistance.

Janz plunged into his new task, only to find that while an organization such as the Union was permissible it had no legal status. A new strategy was essential. Together with his executive council Janz decided to strive for a predominantly economic institution recognized by law, with a broad base capable of confronting most of the problems faced by the Ukrainian Mennonites. For the moment, however, the immediate circumstances in which the majority of Mennonites found themselves set the priorities for his work. The most pressing question of the day was survival. The Civil War, as well as the Soviet economic policy of War Communism, with its emphasis on nationalization and requisition, had depleted all reserves. During the fall and early winter of 1921 the haunting specter of famine began to stalk the land.

It was to this task that Janz first addressed himself. He knew that there was bread in North America, but how could his cry for help be heard so far away? In 1921 only one avenue was open. Late in 1919 a special assembly of Molotschna village representatives met at the village of Rueckenau and dispatched a special commission to Europe and North America to explore emigration possibilities and examine potential settlement sites. The three members of this Study Commission (*Studien-kommission*) arrived in Europe in April, 1920, and in the United States during June. Mennonites on both continents listened receptively to reports picturing the plight of their Russian brethren. After mid-1920, however, members of the Study Commission obtained little new information from their homeland, since almost no letters left Russia following the end of the civil war. The situation was extremely frustrating for Janz in Kharkov. How could he reach his brethren across the sea and in Germany? As a member of the Study Commission in Germany, B. H. Unruh tried to establish contact with Mennonite constituencies in Russia, but with few exceptions had little success.

Finally in 1921 a letter from Janz (dated November 20) reached Unruh via German diplomatic mail. Prosaically Janz wrote: "I do not have the opportunity to write a comprehensive report, since the last chance to send my official correspondence is with the German diplomatic courier who comes in about two hours. You too can utilize this conveyance to safely send us reports from time to time."<sup>4</sup> Janz achieved a tactical masterstroke. The future of many Russian Mennonites depended on the arrangement, since all the correspondence pertaining to eventual emigration now flowed unhindered.

Having re-established communication with the outside world, Janz and his colleagues intensified their efforts to stem the growing famine in the Mennonite colonies. North American Mennonites responded to the appeals of the Study Commission by founding the Mennonite Central Committee in July, 1920. The first unsuccessful attempt to enter Russia with relief supplies was made via Constantinople. Finally in August, 1921, Alvin J. Miller, director of the special MCC agency (American Mennonite Relief) created to deal with the famine in Russia, managed to enter Russia from the west. After lengthy negotiations a relief contract was finally signed between the Soviet Government in Moscow and American Mennonite Relief.

One day in the late fall of 1921 Janz appeared at the door of Miller's hotel room in Moscow as an official representative of the Ukrainian Socialistic Soviet Republic. How did this happen? Janz's first visit to Moscow came in mid-summer of 1921 when he successfully appealed to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party to halt the seizure and division of Mennonite lands in the Ukraine. When news of Miller's arrival in Moscow reached the famine-stricken Mennonite colonies, Janz was again sent to Moscow to confer directly with Miller. Enroute he stopped in Kharkov to determine whether the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs was interested in the distribution of American relief supplies in the Ukraine. To Janz's surprise he was authorized to invite A. J. Miller to the Ukraine for the specific purpose of negotiating another contract for the entry of American aid into that region.

As it turned out Miller's presence in Kharkov and his talks with Ukrainian authorities gave Janz his first satisfactory contact with the Ukrainian officials. During the negotiations which led to the signing of a relief contract Miller, at Janz's prompting, offered AMR aid in the economic reconstruction of the Ukraine by supplying tractors to replace the horses lost in the revolution and civil war. If, with AMR help, the Mennonite Union could become an agency for reconstruction a government endorsement and recognition of its activities might follow. The strategy was well-founded.

A subsequent interview served to focus further attention on the energetic Union and its willingness to participate in rebuilding the Ukraine. Some six months later (April 25, 1922) the Mennonite Union was recognized by the Kharkov government. Official pressure forced a name change: the agency now became the Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage (*Verband der Buerger Hollaendischer Herkunft*).<sup>5</sup> According to its charter the newly legalized organization would work towards restoring the Ukrainian Mennonite colonies to their former level of prosperity. As such it was granted a broad range of economic concessions which provided the Mennonites with a unique opportunity to survive as an economic and cultural group. Janz had achieved a primary objective in his program.

Even the immediate future was not the issue late in 1921. The cry for bread came daily from every settlement. Though Miller's success in Kharkov brought jubilation in the colonies, bureaucratic inefficiency caused endless delay in the

arrival of the badly needed relief supplies. The first shipments only arrived in April, 1922. During the interval the food crisis intensified. "A chasm has actually opened, in part unexpectedly and with unbelievable rapidity," Janz wrote to the American and Dutch Mennonite relief agencies in December, 1921. "It is so incredibly deep and wide it engulfs the great mass of Russians and our people. . . . It is so tragic and hopeless; we are entering the depths of the night of death with such furious speed, that it has happened before one really becomes aware of it."<sup>6</sup> Bread was needed immediately. "Please forget about condensed milk, chocolate or similar things—just bread, bread, bread! . . . This is the great concern of our life! And we beg you again in the name of all our starving ones—send a shipment of flour as quickly as possible."<sup>7</sup>

"Until today no bread has arrived," Janz complained on February 18, 1922. "The colonies are suffering severely. Harder from Fuerstenau is dead. At the orphanage in Grossweide nine children are sick and swollen, as are sixteen people in Waldheim. In the Old Colony a number, especially children, are dead."<sup>8</sup>

By March Janz spoke of the waves threatening to engulf the Mennonite population in the Ukraine, of a time of dying and rotting cadavers.<sup>9</sup> "The gulf between need and possession, production and consumption, availability and demand, daily grows wider and deeper in all areas, and with incredible rapidity leads into the dark future, the night, ruin, towards catastrophe."<sup>10</sup> A few days later in a letter to B. H. Unruh he confided, "That I today must live to see this calamity of my people makes me wretched, old and ill."<sup>11</sup> In the same letter he made a rare reference to his own personal problems. Could Unruh send him a relief parcel? He had difficulty getting enough food.

Amid the growing famine Janz, displaying considerable foresight, began investigating another question. What lay beyond mere survival? Was there a Mennonite future in the new Russia? From the very beginning his personal answer was "no," a view not shared by all his colleagues in the Ukrainian Mennonite Union, and the All-Mennonite Agricultural Union, which represented the Mennonites in the rest of Russia. He viewed emigration as the only reasonable Mennonite response to the new order, but circumstances to 1921-22 allowed no such dreams. There was the question of survival, and survival

initially meant the restoration of agricultural self-sufficiency. It was with this in mind that Janz, late in 1921, began to explore the problem of economic reconstruction in the Mennonite colonies. As already mentioned, Miller's presence in Kharkov on behalf of the AMR contract brought a government endorsement of Mennonite participation in the rebuilding of the south. This interest enabled Janz to first introduce the question of emigration to Kharkov authorities.

The basic argument was simple. Mennonite landholders were essential to economic reconstruction. Civil war, however, had created a rapidly increasing Mennonite refugee population, all of whom were consumers, not producers. By removing surplus population from the settlements two basic problems may be solved: the alleviation of famine and the creation of conditions which would ensure a future livelihood for the area. Janz elaborated this argument in a special petition presented to the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party on December 17, 1921, which requested permission for refugee and landless Mennonites to emigrate.<sup>12</sup>

The duplicity of the petition requesting permission for the refugee and landless Mennonites to emigrate must have been apparent to any experienced bureaucrat. The document began by asserting that Russia provided no hope for the future development of the Mennonite colonies. Though the reasons given for such pessimism were adequate, the petition ignored the fact that Bolshevik authorities were still apprehensive about the Ukraine. The South had been the last stronghold of the White Army; it was here that the new government had encountered the stiffest resistance from counterrevolutionary elements. Then too, the Mennonites had severely compromised their traditional nonresistant position through the activities of the *Selbstschutz*. In the fall of 1921 the Red Army conducted a search for arms and found *Selbstschutz* weapons in many of the Mennonite villages. Janz described the event in his memoirs:

The demand for the surrender of more weapons which had been hidden after the end of the *Selbstschutz* intensified until the most radical means were employed and thirteen persons in the Molotschna region shot as hostages. The weapons came. Even the wells were searched, and not without success. The streams in the area were combed with iron rakes. In the girls' school young people were

stripped, thrown headlong upon the benches and deplorably beaten until bloody—and the revolvers and weapons came.—In this fashion the Mennonites were again made nonresistant.”<sup>13</sup>

When word of the reign of terror reached Janz in Kharkov he drafted a lengthy memorandum documenting the prevailing anarchy. The grievance brief was directed to the Commissariat of Justice. Janz’s course of action was risky, since government reprisal was not out of the question. For a whole day Janz weighed the consequences of his action in a Kharkov Park. The night before, together with his friend and informant H. Kornelsen, Janz had prayed for the success of his petition. Describing the experience Kornelsen writes, “How childlike he spoke with his Father. Yes he pleaded with God for his people. One expressly felt God’s presence. An inner peace came to us. . . .”<sup>14</sup>

Next morning Janz delivered the petition to justice officials, who responded by ordering an immediate investigation into the situation. Immediately after Christmas the chairman of the Committee for National Minorities in the Ukraine met Janz in the district governmental offices in Tokmak.

“We will now come to you in the villages and want to hold hearings at a number of suitable locations in your settlements. Every citizen is free to come and present his grievances,” he announced. “You however, must be personally present at every hearing so that people will have confidence, otherwise they will say nothing. . . . We will begin in Halbstadt.”<sup>15</sup>

Janz was stunned. Central authorities conducting a hearing together with the chairman of the Union! With Janz present the colonists would speak freely and the material gathered in this fashion could be used to charge the Mennonites with counterrevolutionary activity. Was he betraying his own people?

Christmas brought little peace to Janz in 1921. Famine appeared inevitable. Where was there food for his wife and six children? Would his protest against the prevailing anarchy bring personal reprisals? What of the petition to emigrate? The railway cars filled with American relief supplies stood sealed on sidetracks. Was this by design or the result of bureaucratic bungling? In a few weeks or at best months death from starvation was inevitable. Was the message of hope brought by the Christchild for him? He found out it was.



But what of that evening when the eldest daughter announced that a man outside wished to speak to her father. The night was pitch dark and the man did not come into the light. Janz went out. Was this death or life? Anything is possible in these times. Resolutely the one who was called steps out. Yes there was someone, but he was not at all familiar. "Are you Mr. Benjamin Janz," a voice addressed him in the finest German.

"Yes I am."

The person continued, "I have come from Mr. Benjamin Unruh to convey greetings and best wishes to you. He wants you to know that abroad everything humanly possible is being done to help you and the colonies here in every respect. Do not lose courage and do what is possible. You are not alone, the brethren abroad stand for you wherever possible. And now farewell, I must go."

That was the message—so unexpected, so gripping as if it came from heaven. It left such an overwhelming impression and permeated body, soul and spirit with such force that it was difficult to retain self-control. What a comfort—the love and concern of the brotherhood out there in the free lands. All the hardships, cares and fears amidst the Red Sea rolled aside, I could feel free as a man and a Christian amid good people, amid a large brotherhood.<sup>16</sup>

For Janz personally the experiences of late 1921 and early 1922 were especially distressing. At the First General Congress of the Union in Margenau (January 3-4, 1922) he expressed serious doubts about his future leadership. Laying aside the report he had just presented, he became more personal: "Brethren I now have experienced much that suggests the direction in which the new government is going, and I am fully aware of the sequence of further developments. More journeys must be made, but I no longer want to travel. Elect someone else . . . I see nothing good coming for us Mennonites." In spite of many pleas Janz seemed determined to resign his position. Finally late in the session, after much public and private pleading, Janz consented to stay at his post. "I will do it, perhaps I can help our youth as well as society. But don't leave my family in the lurch if things become difficult."<sup>17</sup>

In the early months of 1922 Janz, having accepted his

responsibility once more, worked more energetically than ever. Steadily, amid interviews, meetings and a voluminous personally penned correspondence he pursued the implementation of his Unions' two contradictory policies. On the one hand the organization he headed demonstrated loyalty through energetic participation in the economic reconstruction of the devastated South. On the other, Janz had submitted a petition for emigration to the Central Executive Committee in Kharkov, which implied no material betterment was possible. Janz vigorously pursued both alternatives. For him such a dedication to opposites was dictated by prevailing circumstances.

Was emigration absolutely necessary to the future of the Russian Mennonites? Janz pointed to the events of the recent past—the bloodshed, destruction and famine. Morally, the fiber of the constituency was deteriorating. The Mennonite schools had been taken over by the state and many of the teachers dismissed. Land allotments were reduced, and integration with surrounding populations appeared inevitable. The loss of the old cultural-economic pattern, however, was less disastrous than the loss of treasured religious values. All of these things tipped the balance in favor of emigration.

Yet could not his relentless pursuit of emigration prove wrong in later years? "No!" Janz answered. He knew Russia was in a transitional period. Certainly the pendulum of revolution might swing back to a more rational position in which individual initiative again played a part. Was there not still the possibility for economic and cultural progress? Was there not a role for the Mennonites in the new Russia?

Janz saw a deeper issue than that of economic adaptation and readjustment. The Mennonites were confronted with a government policy dating back to the last quarter of the 19th century, a policy rooted in the historical, cultural and social pattern of the land, namely russification. Since the 1870's the pressure to conform to the Russian national image had never lessened. Even in Soviet Russia minority policy was formulated according to the will of the masses. This historically entrenched trend was irrevocable. A minority of some 100,000 could not long survive such pressures. Emigration was the only alternative.<sup>18</sup>

Janz, though not unresponsive to opposing views, felt that the majority of the Ukrainian Mennonites not only should, but strongly desired to leave.

"In other words [the emigration] has become an elemental tumult, the dams are bursting," he wrote. "The people have made up their minds and are ready to struggle with death and life."<sup>19</sup>

On another occasion he commented: "If one has a number of children, if one has learned to thoroughly know the prevailing principles of the whole system, then one's heart cramps in infinite grief."<sup>20</sup>

Through the entire emigration period Janz remained an unswerving advocate of emigration even though the Kharkov regime had given the Mennonites special recognition, ratifying the Union's charter, and was even willing to engage in dialogue on the question of exemption from military service. Janz nevertheless felt the concessions were temporary, and should be utilized to facilitate the exodus of as many colonists as possible. At no point in his career as leader of the Union did he believe that economic reconstruction was really possible in Soviet Russia. He only advocated that a basis for economic recovery had to be erected for those who remained behind. Even the introduction of the Soviet New Economic Policy in March, 1921, failed to change Janz's outlook.

When American foodstuffs arrived in the colonies in the spring of 1922 many settlers once more thought seriously of reconstruction. Such views were certainly not shared by Janz. For him, reconstruction meant only self-preservation and survival until such a time as it was possible to leave Russia. Little wonder that B. H. Unruh, concerned with aiding his co-religionists in Russia by exploring reconstruction possibilities in Germany, found Janz's letters on the subject too indecisive.

In view of the fact that the Union's charter was ratified on the condition that Holland and America supply the colonies with material aid, Janz requested that several tractors be sent as evidence of his organization's good intentions. Simultaneously he emphasized that since their economic future was extremely unstable, the Russian Mennonites represented poor credit risks.<sup>21</sup> In his estimation an emigration panic had seized the colonies by 1922 which made rebuilding impossible. "The future is as dark as night," he wrote. "We are still striving after a basis for a regulated, secure, and peaceful existence."<sup>22</sup> But would that time ever come? Not in the near future. "Even if this government did not exist and a different one were in its place, the picture would not be much different,"



**B. B. Janz in the doorway of the train leaving the Lichtenau station on July 13, 1924.**

Janz insisted. "And if, contrary to all expectations, the state collapses (which I certainly do not expect) the time following this would be frightful—chaos!"<sup>23</sup>

This conviction that emigration was the only viable solution for the Russian Mennonites became the sustaining ideology undergirding Janz the diplomat. Something about his quiet dignity exerted an unusual influence on an officialdom often more impressed by brazenness and emotional appeal. Though he represented one of the smallest minorities in Russia, he established repeated contacts with the highest levels of government in both Kharkov and Moscow.

As a negotiator Janz had several excellent qualities. His analytical mind quickly penetrated complex issues. If convinced of the honesty and necessity of a given tactic, he pressed his view with a persistence bordering on stubbornness. In a critical encounter he instinctively pressed his advantage just short of the breaking point. Frequently he confronted the same officials again and again until he obtained the desired terms.

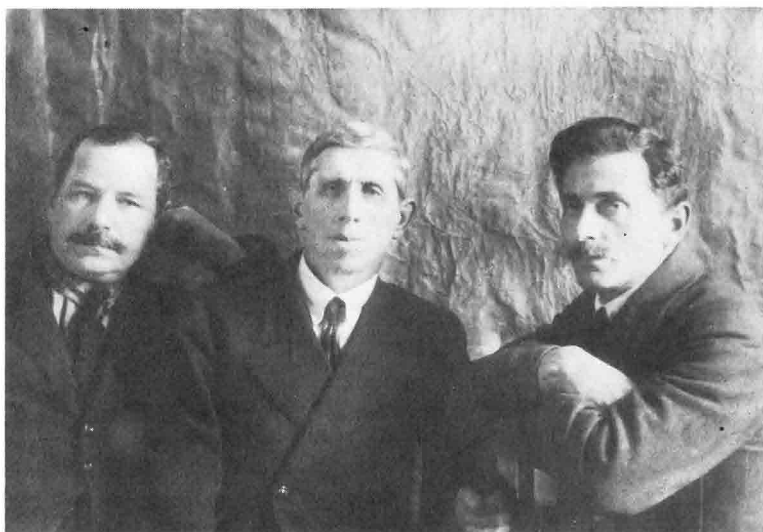
A reaction illustrating this trait came from the chairman of the Passport Department of the Moscow GPU when one of the emigrant echelon leaders, J. J. Thiessen, sought to complete arrangements for transit to Latvia. Waiting until Thiessen had explained that he sought approval for emigration west, he

shouted, "So you come from Janz. For three years I have not crossed myself, but if I could ever free myself of Janz, I would cross myself three times."<sup>24</sup>

Officials of the American agencies concerned with the exodus encountered a steady stream of letters from Janz urging, pleading, and even cajoling them to take more decisive action.

Working amid the politically charged setting of the early Soviet period Janz adopted a secretive diplomatic style. There were good reasons for his caution. As a historic minority group the Mennonites had little in common with the new rulers of Russia. They held to their historic faith; their economic practices were capitalistic; their cultural and ethnic derivation non-Russian. Then too they had been allowed to run their own affairs for over a century. In the Ukraine a Mennonite self-protection organization (*Selbstschutz*) mistakenly fought against Red Army units during the civil war.

Amid such circumstances how could the special concerns of the Mennonites be communicated to the new power holders? Janz's diplomatic strategy was simple: remain unobtrusive; deal only with the highest levels of government; if necessary wait days for a high-level interview; negotiate with as many government departments as possible, allowing the ones favoring you to convince your opponents; if Kharkov disagrees get Moscow to overrule; don't tell your colleagues too much, in their eagerness to help they may disrupt carefully laid plans. Referring to a Mennonite service in Ekaterinoslav which Janz attended a participant reported: "After the meeting we asked him (Janz) many questions but he told us nothing. It was probably better that way since it was unsafe at that time. You know how it is with us Mennonites—the information may not have remained confidential if he had told us."<sup>25</sup>



**The VBHH executive, l. to r. Peter I. Dyck, B. B. Janz (chairman), Philipp Cornies (vice-chairman).**

## *Chapter IV*

### *Trial by Fire*

The year 1923 brought the first departure of Mennonite emigrants from Soviet Russia. The experiences of the first months, however, gave Janz few reasons for optimism. Contacts with Moscow authorities made it increasingly clear that the central government was curtailing Ukrainian independence aspirations. As a result many of the arrangements for emigration from that area required renegotiation. The fact that the Soviet secret police figured heavily in the renewed Moscow talks disturbed Janz, though special talks held during February made it reasonably clear that Secret Police approved the emigration arrangements, but unfortunately thought only 3,000 emigrants were involved.

Additional difficulties arose to complicate the picture. New emigration regulations stipulated that the Mennonites leave individually, not in groups. This called for a massive reapplication for exit visas. Once actual emigration commenced the Canadian Immigration medical examinations were scheduled for Latvia, though inevitable medical rejects still had no place to go, since Soviet authorities refused to let them re-enter Russia. Canada also had not yet indicated the number of emigrants it could receive in 1923. In the Chortitza settlement prospective emigrants, exasperated by continuous delays, threatened to take independent emigration action, even though such a move threatened the existing emigration arrangements.

In January of 1923 Janz, at the verge of despair, commented:

It is dark. Nothing to see; nothing to feel; nothing to appraise; no support, no foundation, no future. Everything is all factual material for negative conclusions, for negation. For a long time I have worked, hoped, striven,

with one word *believed*. . . . The little chest with our entire hope and faith floats as a last wreck upon the billows of the Russian flood, and seems destined and compelled to sink in it. If circumstances don't soon change, Janz must capitulate . . . step aside. The idea of faith and trust may be all right for the church, for life something else must provide the power to endure! <sup>1</sup>

But even amid impossible circumstances Janz still believed in God.

I cannot say no. I will not presume to assert that I can die with unreserved trust in Him, but without that principle I can not live. Oh, that I was catapulted into this struggle, that I have come to stand at the helm of the people! Janz with his simplistic faith laying himself bare before all the people, propelling it and the destiny of an entire people to the pinnacle! Actually, I am not meant; under 'I' all those of the various church groups must be included who await all salvation and all help in time of need from Him.<sup>2</sup>

Slowly faith was vindicated. One by one the obstacles vanished. In Moscow the Foreign Commissariat and the secret police sanctioned the departure of the first 3,000 emigrants. The change from group to individual emigration generated few problems. Worsening economic conditions in Germany did not prevent German Mennonite Aid (*Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe*) from agreeing to care for the Latvian medical rejects at Lechfeld. But nothing was known of these developments in Russia.

"My God has not let me down," Janz wrote on March 29, "The Russian government has performed above expectation. The unfortunate brethren here hope from one day, month and year to the next. Should one now be let down by our brethren abroad? I have always encouraged my people to absolute trust, have I been wrong? Brethren, on whom shall one rely, which way shall one go?"<sup>3</sup> In mid-April he still lamented that "with sorrows, apprehensions and great impatience we await the guarantee of the Board for defectives."<sup>4</sup>

When the news that Germany was prepared to accept the medically unfit finally arrived in Moscow at the end of April, preparations for the movement of emigrants began immediately. All the government departments related to the venture were cooperative. The first group of 726 Mennonite emigrants



left Chortitza on June 22, 1923, and crossed the Soviet border at Sebez on July 1. But for Janz the departure held little personal triumph.

I suppose I shall have to be prepared to become the most hated man, since I cannot accommodate all the wishes which make themselves so strongly felt. That is a heavy burden, brethren. You have now removed a part of it. The longer one works, the more one's goal must be kept in mind; utilizing the thousands of voices only as they run along this line; love all, serve all, without deviating from the goal. Who is capable of this? To this burden others are added . . . but I will not speak of them. I will bear [my burdens] with a stalwart heart for another year if God wills. How He will accomplish it is beyond me, one can see nothing. Circumstances here continue to knot together—like a Gordian knot—and a solution is not in sight. There is only one thing to do—again and again, resolutely call out to the fearful hoping heart "Have faith!" The night is so long and cold. . . . The people are tired and seek rest. . . . We can't go on any longer, in every respect. . . .

I can't end in such a pessimistic tone. Our optimism amid the Russian or socialistic night is the eternal God, our Father. He has struck us down, he will also heal us.<sup>5</sup>

Janz's mood reflected the never relenting pressures connected with facilitating emigration. Between June 22 and July 24 four groups of emigrants were permitted to leave Russia. Hardly had the emigrants arrived in Latvia when a major crisis erupted. Some 387 of the first two groups and 252 of the third group were medically rejected as potential emigrants to Canada. "What has happened?" wrote Janz. "Are we all sick?"<sup>6</sup> The severe medical examinations subsequently conducted in the various settlements, especially for trachoma, did not endear Janz to the destitute, impatient refugees looking for passage abroad.

Soviet authorities in Moscow now decided to halt all further emigration, since they were under the impression that there were only 3,000 Mennonite emigrants, all of whom had left. On July 7 a Moscow dispatch reached Kharkov which informed Janz that for the present no further exodus was permitted. Abroad no new contract between the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization seemed in

the making. In fall Janz learned that the Board considered any further emigration out of the question for 1923.

Amid all these obstacles Janz emerged as the persistent, unrelenting negotiator and diplomat. While in Moscow during the first week in July he learned of the government's intention to curtail further emigration.<sup>7</sup> In a special meeting with officials he suggested that the Central Executive Committee decree limiting emigration related only to the Mennonites in greater Russia, not the Ukraine. Exit permits had already been granted in Kharkov by the Ukrainian government. Since these emigrants had to leave by Sebezh, they only needed transit permits not emigration visas. In October he finally succeeded in obtaining transit permission through the RSFSR for two emigrant lists sanctioned by the Ukrainian government which contained 1,333 and 3,541 names respectively.<sup>8</sup> The next move had to come from abroad, but the news was bad. In Moscow the CPR informed Janz that no more emigrants would be transported until the spring of 1924. First success then failure!

The departure of the first four emigrant trains naturally caused a number of family separations, but medical factors were not alone responsible for this. Some parents left without their older sons because they had been conscripted into the Red Army and were scattered throughout Russia. Approximately twenty of these soldiers were released by the Soviet High command in the summer of 1923 so that they might join their emigrating parents. To avoid reenlistment the young men had to leave Russia by December 1.<sup>9</sup> Most were processed without too much difficulty. For several, complications arising from the fact that they had married delayed their departure past the December 1 deadline. Janz petitioned the Soviet High Command on behalf of these men. Its favorable response was sealed in an envelope and given to Janz with the directive that he deliver it to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Here the receptionist emptied the envelope of its contents, signed her name on the back, and returned it to Janz. Always reluctant to destroy any document, he slipped it into his briefcase. Unknown to him it was soon to be of critical importance.

It was December 22. An uneventful day had passed. Around eight o'clock in the evening Janz's hostess, Mrs. F. Isaak, summoned him to meet a caller. A man in a black leather jacket handed him an envelope. Was it perhaps from the

GPU? The enclosed note confirmed Janz's premonition. "Comrade Janz. You are to appear at the GPU headquarters, Lubyanka 2, third floor, room 178 tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. You will be required to provide information on certain questions. In case of noncompliance you will be brought in by armed escort." The messenger gave no reason for the summons. Janz acknowledged its receipt with his signature. The motorcycle mounted messenger vanished. Tomorrow, December 23, he (Janz) would meet the GPU.<sup>10</sup> What could this mean—torture, imprisonment—but why? Had he not proceeded legally and openly? That night he slept little but prayed much.

What an innocent-sounding name GPU, Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie (State Political Administration)! Even the building on Lubyanka 2 had beauty. At the top of the front gable stood a large statue of a hovering angel. Sometimes only a wall separated the sacred from the profane. An angel hovering over a labyrinth of death! Janz presented his summons to the guards, who acknowledged his entry by slightly tearing it. The reverse side of the summons was not yet endorsed. Only when it was, would Janz be free to leave again.

Room 178 was not large. It contained several tables and a few chairs. Perhaps, Janz thought, the purposes for which it was used did not require size or furniture. For Janz's interview one table and two chairs were necessary—one for Janz, the other for his inquisitor. From the onset it was obvious that he was highly experienced in obtaining the desired information from his victims.

"Who are you and where are you from?" Janz presented the necessary documents.

"What is the purpose of your trip to Moscow?" Janz chose not to mention the fact that he had come to seek the release of the Mennonite young men. He could nevertheless point out other reasons for his presence.

His inquisitor was not satisfied.

"Isn't your main purpose in Moscow to confer with Alvin J. Miller of the AMR and with him plot the emigration of the Mennonites to America?" Janz protested energetically. To no avail. The theme was repeatedly brought forward. Finally the impatient examiner shouted, "You lie! Take a piece of paper and record the facts!" He had already taken the liberty to list conspiracy with Miller as one of the facts of the case. Janz wrote, but only to deny this assumption. The inquisitor paced

the floor, occasionally glancing at the paper. He finally grunted and with that snatched the paper from Janz. In the next moment he announced the topic he had probably wanted to discuss all along, the release of the Mennonite soldiers.

Janz proceeded to clear the slate. The entire list had been approved by some of the chief authorities in Moscow. All were sons of emigrating families. Their names had been presented to the general staff of the Red Army during the summer (1923) and approved for release. This release had been honored by the Revolutionary Military Council which granted exit passes to these young men.

"How do you know all this?"

"I personally carried the sealed letter from the Revolutionary Military Council to the Foreign Commissariat."

"Have you any proof of this?"

"Yes, the receptionist took the document out of the envelope, signed her name on it, and returned it to me."

"Show me the envelope!"

Janz began to search for the envelope in his briefcase. Though of considerable size, it was nowhere to be seen.

"I can't locate it," said Janz.

"Show me that envelope!" the examiner insisted. Janz carefully sorted the papers. There it was!

His inquisitor took the envelope as well as all the other papers contained in his briefcase into an adjoining room. When he returned, he gave all the papers back to Janz. He spoke with a most pleasant manner. "Everything is in order. Continue in your work. You are free."

The VBHH chairman was puzzled. What was the reason for this sudden change of attitude? Perhaps it was his turn to be aggressive. He addressed the GPU official:

"You have made a long and severe inquiry about the emigration; now I must also ask you a question."

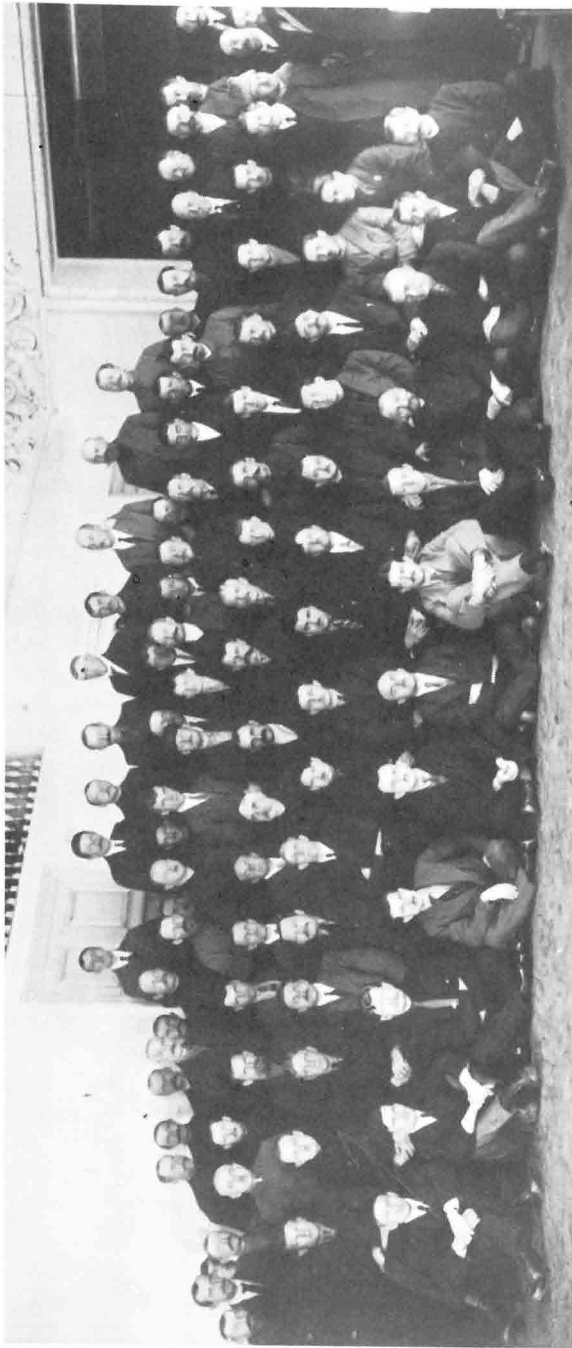
"Very well."

"Please, what is your name?"

"Solovyov."

"Well, Comrade Solovyov, since you have examined me so critically, tell me openly and directly—does the central government not wish that I send the poor Mennonites to America?"

"You have done everything upon a legal basis, everything is in good order, and I can only tell you to continue in this manner."



The last meeting of the "Verband der Bürger Holländischer Herkunft" in Kharkov, Ukraine, February 17-20, 1926. Janz resigned less than a month later. Among the delegates seen are the following on the second row from the front: J. I. DeJager, Chairman of the Sagradowka District; Gerhard Funk, Chairman of the Chortitza District; Peter F. Proese, Chairman of "Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein", Moscow; Philipp D. Cornies, Vice-Chairman of V.D.H.H.; Peter I. Dyck, Chairman of Jekaterinoslaw District; B. B. Janz, Chairman of V.D.H.H.; Comrade Lobanoff, Chairman of All-Ukrainian Central Commission for National Minorities; J. J. Thieseen, Chairman of the February Congress; Comrade Buzenko, Secretary of the All-Ukrainian People's Executive Committee; Hermann F. Dyck, Second Chairman of the Congress; H. Sawatzky, Third Chairman of the Congress; Comrade Zalarius; Comrade Gebhard; Representative of the German Communist Section; Comrade Drobot; Hans Thielmann.

"This is not enough. I would like to hear the opinion of the government from you. Is it perhaps better if I let the matter rest in order to avoid unpleasantness?"

"I cannot tell you more than what I have already said. Your business is in order and you may continue your work. Good-bye!"

Solovyov certified Janz's entry permit and left. Confused, Janz made his way to the exit. In what had he become entangled? At first Solovyov played the inquisitor, then the gentleman. Apparently the release of the Mennonite soldiers was a touchy issue. The guard at the door took Janz's entry permit. He was free once more.

Not long after his interview with the GPU Janz met with the Canadian Pacific Railway representative in Moscow, A. R. Owen, and made a simple proposal. Since there were many Mennonites still able to pay the cost of their transit to Canada, could arrangements not be made with the Canadian government to receive these people. Again bureaucrats and bureaucratic procedures in both Canada and Russia had to be dealt with but by mid-February, 1924, all the technicalities connected with individual, self-financed emigration had been cleared.<sup>11</sup> The landless and refugee elements of the Mennonite population, however, could still obtain total or half-credit from the Canadian Board, but each emigrant had to apply for exodus himself, not through a group.

The expanded emigration possibilities did not really alter the character of Janz's work. Delays and frustrations were daily experiences. For the first four months of 1924 the painfully negotiated arrangements for individual emigration lay dormant, for no word of a contract between the Board and the CPR in Canada reached Russia. In mid-February Janz wrote: "The new possibility of individual emigration at one's own expense has shown that we were only dealing with an apparent calmness. People simply told themselves, 'It is impossible.' Now that something can be done there is a widespread stirring."<sup>12</sup> That "widespread stirring" turned to widespread impatience by April.

## *Chapter V*

### *Emigration At Last*

In Kharkov Janz witnessed the 1924 May Day parade and listened to speeches proclaiming salvation and healing through the Bolshevik Revolution. He could think only of the turbulent spirit which had swept his land. Emigration was the only escape, yet till now only a few thousand of his brethren had left. He returned to his lodgings deeply depressed. When he entered his quarters he found a lengthy telegram reporting that the Canadian government was prepared to receive 5,000 emigrants on credit as well as additional colonists able to pay their own way. He could hardly believe it.

For months there had been mounting tension and anxiety, now the hurried, complicated technical preparations for the evacuation.<sup>1</sup> Finally all was in readiness. Even a letter of protection for the emigrant trains had been obtained from the Foreign Commissariat in order to avoid the delays which had afflicted the 1923 transports. In Moscow Janz had one last consultation with the Russian official assisting A. R. Owen of the CPR in Moscow. The meeting ended on a disturbing note. Taking leave of Janz the official observed, "I am somewhat concerned about this new movement. Although everything is well ordered I sense that difficulties will arise. I feel one should go into the cathedral and set up a very large candle for the great God."<sup>2</sup>

When Janz returned to Kharkov he found the premonition had been correct. Having completed the routine arrangement for the emigration, he informed the consul of the German legation in Kharkov, Herman von Hey, of his good fortune. He failed to share Janz's enthusiasm. The emigration leader soon found out why. The German consul, convinced that the exodus of the colonists was not in the future interests of Germany, had sought an injunction against the mass emigration from the chairman of the Ukrainian Council of People's Com-

missars.<sup>3</sup> Janz soon learned that von Hey's reservations were also held by government authorities in Kharkov and Moscow.

In Moscow, authorities refused to honor the exit permits of the first emigrant group scheduled to depart on June 23 without a reconfirmation of these by Kharkov. In Donetsk province exit permits were denied to 79 Mennonite refugees. Kharkov officials were unwilling to ratify supplementary emigrant lists, containing replacements for those medically disqualified in the earlier lists. An appeal to the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars on the first two issues only produced exit permits for the Donetsk Mennonites. The supplementary lists containing some 453 names were returned to Janz with that explanation that in the future no group emigration involving lists would be tolerated. It was June 14! In nine days the first group was scheduled to depart from the Lichtenau terminal, Molotschna. Emigration was again at an impasse!

Janz chose a daring course of action. He dispatched a lengthy telegram to both the GPU passport department and Peter G. Smidovich of the Central Executive Committee in Moscow. For two days he waited anxiously, fearful that his audacity might bring reprisals. When the answer finally arrived it was terse and to the point. The emigrants could leave on June 23! Janz recalled the incident in his memoirs: "My small quarters became a hallowed place of worship, such as the largest candle in the greatest cathedral could not have supplied."<sup>4</sup>

Though the first group left without incident, Janz was sure the entire emigration movement was in jeopardy. An interview with the Kharkov GPU convinced Janz that an embargo against further emigration in the Ukraine was imminent.<sup>5</sup> He left for Moscow, for only here could decisive action be taken. There was still one friend in Moscow, the former Commissar of Internal Affairs and onetime head of the Ukrainian secret police in Kharkov, Manzev. He had cooperated with Janz in the registration of the VBHH charter, and when he left Kharkov invited Janz to notify him if any grave problems arose. He kept his word. With Manzev's support the Moscow GPU passport department approved the second group of some 1,220 emigrants without hesitation. Their departure was uneventful.

When the third emigrant list for 1924 arrived in the Moscow GPU offices it was not ratified. Upon further inquiry Janz was



informed of a Kharkov government memorandum protesting further emigration. Moscow would only act if Kharkov reconfirmed its approval of the emigration, a move which was out of the question! Janz visited another friend, Smidovich of the CEC, but he could do little more than promise to present the issue at the next meeting of the Council of People's Commissars. Despondently Janz reported, "Government circles in Moscow as in Kharkov are very apprehensive about the mass exodus of the Mennonites. They express surprise, inquire, send out commissions to investigate, withdraw provisions for a free departure."<sup>6</sup>

The situation had never been more critical. The people comprising the third group were almost all refugees who had fled to the Gnadenfeld Volost from elsewhere when their homes and farms were uprooted by revolution and civil war. Completely destitute, many of them survived only through the generosity of American Mennonite Relief. They expected to leave in 1924. Now they faced the prospect of another winter in Russia with little food or clothing. Perhaps they would never be able to leave at all! Many refugees were bitterly disappointed and harshly criticized Janz. Few were aware of the diplomatic complexities he had to deal with. Initially the lists for the 1924 emigration groups were approved in the fall of 1923. Since the first two lists contained 4,974 names Janz decided not to add the 2,162 names of the third group to the list, since this might have alarmed the government and resulted in the complete termination of the movement. When the time came to have the list ratified in 1924, Moscow was directly involved in emigration and Kharkov sought to halt all further exodus. In Moscow the list became confused with an AMLV petition (approved February 18, 1924) for the evacuation of 4,000 Mennonite refugees from the RSFSR. The Gnadenfeld refugees were even advised to prepare for embarkation. When the error was discovered, it was too late. Toward the end of August Janz made a special trip to Moscow seeking approval for list three, but two weeks of sustained effort, produced no result. Similar attempts made during September and early October were equally fruitless.<sup>7</sup>

Events in Canada intensified the tragedy. In July the CMBC reduced its 1924 immigration contract to 3,000 persons. Not long after, the CPR ordered all further movement of credit emigrants to cease. Meanwhile in late summer a Soviet currency reform at high exchange rates made money

extremely scarce for emigrants who wished to pay their own way. Despondently Janz wrote:

"The percentage of the distressed and needy is particularly high in this list [Gnadenfeld refugees]. Their departure is a crying necessity. And now the transport is stopped. We do not know the reasons. Either the brethren in Canada have become disunited and thus annulled the contract, or political issues have arisen, which make further transport impossible. We will continue to suffer. Allow us to continue to hope."<sup>8</sup>

Janz refused to capitulate even though embarkation proceedings were halted and the CPR doctors examining potential emigrants left for London. He dispatched a telegram to Rosthern. Would the Board accept 1,600 emigrants who could pay their own way, had their permits, and been medically cleared?<sup>9</sup> The response to this plea was totally unexpected. A telegram on August 20 announced the CPR was willing to transport another 1,000 credit passengers as well as an undetermined number of emigrants able to finance their own way.

With the return of the CPR doctors, preparations for the renewal of emigration were made as quickly as possible. The new exodus, which continued late into 1924, produced a sequence of crises involving quotas, departure deadlines and delays in the granting of exit passes. Finally on December 2 a laconic dispatch from the leader of the last group reached Janz in Kharkov. It read simply, "Traversed Sebezh."

For Janz personally the 1924 emigration was extremely trying. Every ray of hope was squelched by multiple threats of failure. The movement had not begun when government authorities threatened to terminate it. If success came, it was usually counterbalanced by some other anti-climatic event. When the exodus finally began the Board in Canada reduced its contract. Similarly the renewed emigration in late summer was constantly threatened by departure deadlines. Notwithstanding this, some 5,048 emigrants left Russia in 1924. Of these, 3,894 emigrated on credit while the rest paid their own passage.

Janz was not satisfied. So much time and effort had been expended with such limited results. Comparatively few people out of the large constituency anxious to emigrate were able to leave. Added to this was the direct opposition of the Kharkov government to any further exodus.

A poor harvest in 1924 brought an economic setback detrimental to the operations and prestige of the VBHH. There were obvious government moves to rob the agency of its independence. Janz found himself under careful surveillance by the fall of 1924 and some feared for his safety. "We have a personal verbal report through a doctor that Janz, step by step, is being sharply watched by spies," reported B. H. Unruh. "All his letters are carefully censored. We are still in secret contact with him. He may suddenly be imprisoned."<sup>10</sup>

In spite of its difficulties the 1924 emigration still had meaning for Janz. Before the news that emigration could recommence arrived in August he reflected on the help which the Mennonites abroad had already extended. "It has preserved the courage and hope of a better future for us and has kept us from simply disintegrating."<sup>11</sup>

The next year, 1925, brought no substantial change in the character of the emigration movement. In Canada the Board and the CPR had not finalized a contract for the further transportation of emigrants until late June. Once the emigration got under way the usual problems emerged: departure deadlines; the processing of long lists in a short period; officials reluctant to grant the necessary exit permits; emigrants impatient to leave. Because of delays and complications the actual movement of emigrants only began in late summer, most of the groups being small, numbering anywhere from 400 to 1,000. Fortunately the majority of the Gnadenfeld refugees were evacuated. It was November before the last passes, valid for only three months, were granted.

Characteristically, Janz plead with the Board to transport these people in mid-winter. "Do this once more. Give these people the beginning of a new life. The days will come when the consequences of your action will appear much more important than now."<sup>12</sup> His letter contained a warning. "Next year pass difficulties can be anticipated like never before."<sup>13</sup> He noted the difficulties which had confronted the emigration and of the growing pressure against the VBHH. The organization was about to be replaced by locally organized and party-sponsored cooperatives. "Whatever may happen," he observed, "it is certain that I will no longer remain at my post and that I personally will stand at the coffin of the precious Union of all Mennonites at whose cradle I stood in 1921."<sup>14</sup>

Such pessimism was well-founded. During 1925 his organization was not only forbidden to act in emigration matters

but forced to transfer its central administration from Orloff to Kharkov. In September the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee ordered the Union to revise its structure, a move designed to make the agency directly dependent on the state and the party. When a VBHH Congress met in Kharkov (February 17-19, 1926) it was forced to comply with the government directives. It was clear to Janz that his role as a Mennonite leader in Russia was over. Regretfully, the Congress accepted his resignation.

For the Mennonites in the Ukraine Janz's name was invariably linked with two achievements, relief and emigration. Janz was the great proponent of autonomy in every possible field and continually fought for the preservation of the Mennonites as a distinctive national minority. Willing to cooperate with government officials in economic matters, he nevertheless staunchly opposed any attempt to rob the Mennonites of their cultural and religious heritage. At the same time he was keenly aware that he was fighting a losing battle and consequently, privately and unofficially, he remained the great advocate of emigration from Russia. Deeply convinced that the Mennonites had no future in the land of their birth, he had tirelessly explored even the remotest possibility in the hope of leading his people from the land which he frequently compared with Egypt of old. Janz's resignation signified the beginning of the end for the Mennonite emigration from Soviet Russia.

Janz soon had good reason to be concerned for his own safety. On March 5, 1926, scarcely two weeks after the Kharkov Congress, a young man in a leather jacket appeared at the door of his residence at No. 4 Butovsky in Kharkov. As in 1923 he had to acknowledge the receipt of a summons from the Kharkov GPU. It originated with Tolstov, head of the GPU department for Mennonite affairs. Janz was cordially received in Tolstov's office on March 6. Tolstov observed that he had wished to speak with Janz for some time. When Janz suggested that the method chosen to arrange the interview could have been less drastic Tolstov implied that the GPU had chosen the gentlest way.

The examination began.<sup>15</sup> Why were the Mennonites still emigrating? Local conditions had improved immeasurably, but the desire to emigrate remained as strong as ever. Most alarming was the fact that settlements which had never been interested in leaving Russia were now clamoring for exit

permits. The Mennonites were a progressive agricultural element of great importance to Russia. Why did they want to leave?

"This is also surprising to me," Janz replied, "New York [Russia], for example, is a very stable settlement. In view of a widespread wish to emigrate I asked its representatives what was going on. They replied that the compulsory resettlement of five former landowners of the area had shattered the confidence of the colonists. If these were forced to leave, when would it be their turn?"

"But they have a great deal of land." Tolstov retorted, "What are their other reasons?"

"There are the new school texts which contain anti-religious material. Then, too, a school commission has traveled through the villages and exerted excessive pressure on teachers and students. The thirteen-year-old head of the student collective was publicly scolded because he has as yet recruited no Young Pioneers."

"And further?"

"The land question, which needs no additional explanation."

Tolstov mentioned that the Fuerstenland settlement as well as the Nepluyev villages near Nikopol had been hard hit during the imperialist war. "Now the situation has improved and still they want to emigrate," he continued. "There is here some interested party, some guiding hand. According to the plan everything is organized."

"But we set up lists in 1922 which you ratified."

"How is the situation in Canada?"

"I do not know."

"We will not play hide and seek. I know everything. I have exact reports from America."

"I know nothing."

"How so?"

"Some time ago I informed the Board that the VBHH was no longer involved with the emigration. Now I am no longer fully informed."

Tolstov was unconvinced. "You certainly must be informed about the critical situation of the Board with regard to the payments. Then also I am interested how you personally view the movement. Should emigration take place or not?"

"That is a question that cannot easily be answered. If someone wishes to leave or stay, it is his personal decision. I accept no responsibility."

"Those are technical considerations which I understand. But what is your personal attitude to the matter?"

"My attitude is manifest in the Grigoryevka Congress resolution. The position of the VBHH is my position."

Tolstov again returned to the "interested parties" fostering the emigration. Various events were cited as evidence. Even Mennonite history entered the discussion. What of Janz's participation in the emigration movement? What of the certificates issued by the VBHH?

Janz replied, "I have informed the Mennonites that they will not be issued in the future. In the past they simply certified that the person in question was a Mennonite."

"I suspect they were more than that, I heard they were declarations of a political character. Such a document must have some importance!"

"The matter is very simple. I had to certify that the people involved were Mennonites." . . .

"Who will issue the permits in the future?"

"I do not know."

At that moment S. Karlson, head of the Kharkov GPU entered the room. Two questions were put to Janz. What impression did the reorganization of the VBHH make upon the colonists? What would he, Janz, do in the future?

"I will not work any longer," Janz replied.

"What? No, you will work!" Thereupon Karlson left the room.

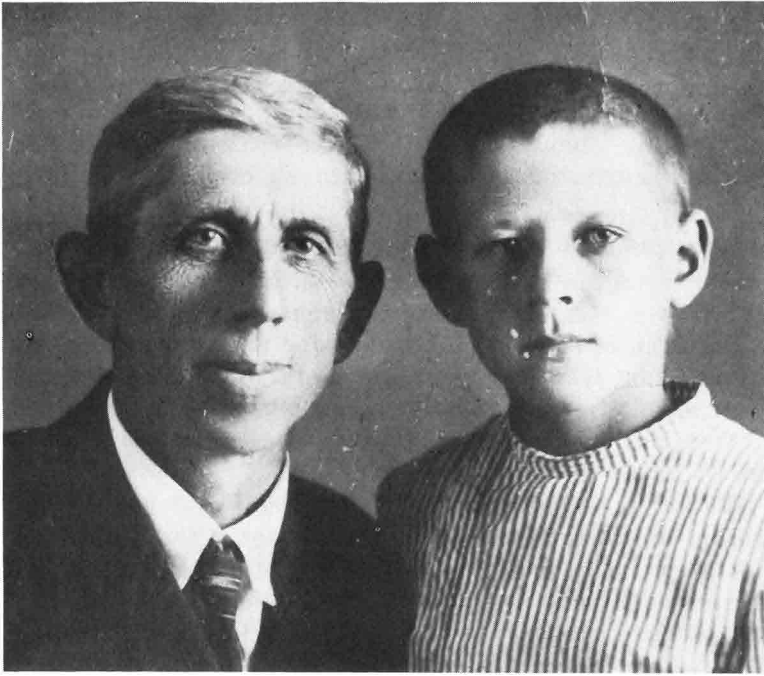
Tolstov had one more question with regard to a VBHH loan from abroad. What was the status of this matter?

Janz explained the issue as best he could and promised to provide the GPU with a written explanation of the affair. Tolstov finally closed the interview with the remark that Janz seemed to have considerable capacity for work.

A second hearing was held in March 10. On this occasion Janz pointed to another reason for the emigration, namely, the question of military service. If this was not regulated, many more would leave. Tolstov insisted that the Soviet Union had a law capable of accommodating conscientious objectors.

"The law is adequate if all Soviet agencies operated with the respectability of the military and GPU," explained Janz. "The People's Courts, however, are a great obstacle for the Mennonites."

"But it would be very hard to create a new law for the Mennonites."



**B. B. Janz and son Jacob 1925.**

"It might be well if a GPU circular, insisting the law be carefully observed, were sent to the People's Courts," Janz urged.

Tolstov abruptly changed the subject. Janz sensed that Tolstov had intended to ask the question for some time. "What connections do you have with the German consulate? We know that you had much to do with von Hey. What was your business?"

"During the time of the famine we sought help from the German Red Cross. Then too we sought to import German tractors and other machinery."

"Was the German Red Cross in the colonies to any great extent?"

"No, only in Zagradovka."

"Have delegates from the German Red Cross visited you? Has an American Relief Administration man been to see you?"

Was Tolstov seriously seeking to uncover counterrevolutionary activity? Or was he simply intimidating the VBHH?

Janz explained that only the staff of the American Mennonite Relief had visited the colonies.

"Why does the German consulate and Germany have such a great interest in the German colonies?"

"We (the Mennonites) are Soviet citizens. Germany is probably interested in the colonies as centers of German culture."

"What nationality are the Mennonites?"

"Here you are touching upon a difficult question. If one asserts we Mennonites are Germans, it is probably an historical inaccuracy. At the same time you cannot call them Dutch." Janz related the beginnings of the VBHH, particularly stressing Manzev's role in the naming of the organization. At that time the nationality question was settled in favor of the Dutch.

With this the hearing was ended. Janz had learned two reasons for the government's great interest in the emigration. It was probably interested in keeping its most progressive farmers in Russia. Then too, the Mennonite press in America had attracted the attention of the Kharkov regime by its uncomplimentary articles about conditions in Russia.

Janz resigned as VBHH chairman on March 11, 1926. Convinced he had no future in Russia as ex-leader of the Union, he made application for an exit permit on March 9, 1926. In mid-April he was assured his request would be granted. By the end of the month the coveted document was in his possession. Authorities promised his family a permit in a month's time. On May 14 Janz took his leave at the Commission for Church Affairs (Kommission fuer Kirchenangelegenheiten) meeting in Margenau. Ten days later he delivered his farewell address in the Mennonite Brethren Church in Tiege, Molotschna.<sup>16</sup>

In his opening remarks Janz noted that as a group the Mennonites had, during the past years, proceeded openly and legally. The emigration was a deliberate government-sanctioned movement, not a mass flight. He soon changed the subject. Most of the people listening to Janz were staying in Russia. Did he have something to say to them? For Janz there was only one thing which could sustain the Mennonites through any adversity—an inner spiritual vitality. The economic decline of the colonies was not the greatest loss. It had in fact restored the much greater treasure of personal religion.



In 1914 a new period began in the history of our people. Mothers, fathers, and teachers—all have acknowledged one thing. All of us were struck down; some were led into prison. But thanks to God the Mennonite can pray in the last great crisis. Where others curse and rant and damn their fate, the Mennonite prays. The past years have shown this.

Janz pointed to the material abundance that had characterized the pre-1914 era. There had been large wheat reserves.

But this is no longer true. Previously barns were torn down and larger ones built; today they are torn down and smaller ones built. But this is not the greatest misfortune. A question, have we not been happier and more blessed with the small barns and the small wheat piles? Be content with what there is . . . God was able to use a wealthy Mennonite society less effectively than a poor one. A certain deportment is essential. It is not serious that we are all poor. The results will be beneficial. The greatest misfortune is to lose your hold on God. Our churches have cooperated as best they could. Prior to 1914 a difference existed between them. During the time of troubles we were all unified—one calamity, one God; despite various teachings—unified! Between 1914 and 1922 a decline; from 1922 till now a rise. And during the most difficult time, down in the valley, individually how they folded their hands—they were unified. A common searching after the Way of Life. That was lovely.

He had taken his leave. There was one last visit to familiar Kharkov. How frequently this locale had meant disappointment, anxiety, and fear. There was still fear. Did the GPU know of his intent to leave Russia? Would he be allowed to leave Kharkov? Arrangements for the departure were carefully made. Special agents purchased the railway tickets for Janz, carried his baggage into a train compartment, and aided him in boarding the train without being recognized. The train carrying Janz left Kharkov on May 28.

The hour of departure from my homeland and for a time from my family, struck on May 28. Unobtrusively I left for an executive council meeting in Kharkov, to which a dispatch had actually invited me. Hints from Moscow indicated it was high time I left. After obtaining a

two-month entry visa to Germany in Kharkov (German consulate) I departed on May 31. In Moscow I received an English entry visa. I left Moscow on June 3. . . .<sup>17</sup>

A few hours after his departure the Kharkov GPU began an unsuccessful search for Janz. His journey, though filled with anxiety, was uneventful. The emigration leader crossed into Latvia at Sebezh on June 4. Now he himself attained the freedom he had won for so many. Officially the emigration movement was now at an end. In actual fact, however, it did not terminate in 1926. A number of emigrants still managed to leave Russia during 1927 and 1928. These however, came only as a result of the strength of the organizational structure which successfully secured the exodus of thousands between 1923 and 1926.

## *Chapter VI*

### *A New Land*

When he stepped off the train in Germany on June 8, Janz the Russian Mennonite leader became Janz the immigrant. Like thousands of his brethren before him, he was a stranger in a strange land. Virtually until the day he left Russia he remained the central figure of the emigration movement—counseling, seeking interviews, and initiating a complex series of bureaucratic procedures. Once in Germany Janz was a displaced person, an alien without a homeland or nationality. He belonged nowhere and had no place to live. He was finally free of the fear of arrest and imprisonment and the burden of VBHH leadership, but what now? Where should he settle? Germany had never attracted him. It could not be his new homeland in spite of the kind welcome extended him by his old acquaintance, B. H. Unruh, and the German Mennonite theologian and pastor, Christian Neff.

Janz was not sure about Canada. He feared its formidable climate, its open society and the difficulties of mastering a new language and culture. If God wanted him there and he saw no alternatives, how could he survive financially? The diplomatic, administrative and intellectual skills which had enabled him to save thousands were useless outside of Russia. Yes, he was a minister, but most of the Russian Mennonites (including Janz) felt a paid ministry was unbiblical. Was farming the only alternative for him, a man approaching fifty, physically frail and possessing no land?

Now picture to yourself a man in his 49th year. . . . Further, he has a dear family of six children, of whom one is already there [in Canada]. He is waiting longingly for the other five. . . . All have the courage to come to a new land and seek a new Home. . . . I am literally completely "homeless". And yet with our [good] health and above all

with our steadfast trust and faith in our heavenly Father we are hopeful and ready to take on the new difficulties which Canada holds for us."

Meanwhile Janz was preoccupied with an even more basic concern. His family was still in Russia and he feared for their safety. Would they be granted their exit visas? One June 18 his wife Marie reported by telegram, "Not yet received."<sup>2</sup> A tense vigil ensued. There was still another problem. What of his aged parents? They could not be left to die in Russia. "It would have been too painful for me to go and leave my beloved parents over there in that distant desert. They shall come too, and if God wills I want to let them live with me. If, however, their time should be short, someone might say, 'It won't be worthwhile!' But for me as a child it is always worthwhile, even if I only have the privilege of pressing their eyelids shut."<sup>3</sup>

Janz was soon united with his family. Eventually his parents were also permitted to leave Russia. By October, 1926, his mother joined the three of her children living together on Kate Street in Winnipeg.<sup>4</sup> His father endured months of loneliness in Atlantic Park, England, where he was detained because of eye disease. He was finally allowed to leave in June, 1927.<sup>5</sup>

Where should he settle? The question dominated all other concerns. Janz sent letters to acquaintances and relatives in Canada requesting information on settlement areas, farming possibilities, land prices and the like. The majority of replies confessed ignorance of the new country and suggested he confer with knowledgeable people once in Canada. For him farming was inevitable. Regardless of his inexperience he had to face the problem directly. He, his brother and one of his brothers-in-law were all teachers. How, in middle age, could they become farmers overnight? By September, 1926, a possible solution to the dilemma began to crystallize in Janz's mind.

As far as we are concerned we will have to take a farm, even if I accept some public ministry, which is by no means certain. I really wish we could obtain three or four farms as neighbours; we, the two Toewses and J. Janz. Then, in the event that John Toews and I cannot always be at home on the farm [both were ministers], Abraham Toews as a good farmer would always be there. Perhaps we could

plant the first crop together. Then we would have a real family life, a home.<sup>6</sup>

In the spring of 1927, Janz visited the United States to solicit continued support for the new immigrants to Canada. While there, a letter from the Department of Immigration reached him, inquiring as to why he had not yet settled on a farm.<sup>7</sup> Once more he had to think of farming! A few weeks later Janz left Winnipeg for the small town of Coaldale, Alberta. He arrived there on July 23, 1927. Two days later he wrote: "A joyful hope for a better future prevails everywhere. This hope stems from the good beet fields and from the magnificent grain and alfalfa fields. The people have the very best vegetables and beautiful potatoes."<sup>8</sup>

Janz was impressed by the vibrancy of the settlement. "What we saw was the great poverty of the immigrants and their bright hope—then the extraordinary fruitfulness of nature."<sup>9</sup> He resolved to settle in the community. The task was difficult. "Now I am faced with the obligation of finding a home, of selecting a farm, of pledging much much money for it, of bringing you all here," he reported to his family. "Only later will it become apparent if we have done well by it or if we will be drowned in debt and overwork."<sup>10</sup>

During subsequent weeks Janz continued his search for a farm and tried to learn about the agricultural techniques employed in the area. After reporting some of his observations to his brother, Jacob B. Janz, he commented: "Forgive me, I seem to be up to my neck in [sugar] beets! Now our mother [his wife, Marie] almost has me where she always wanted me—on the farm—above all on a beet farm! Won't she be happy! Then cows, (that is a dairy operation) also enter the picture. Our four girls will milk the cows, five apiece perhaps. Hoeing beets in the daytime, milking cows morning and evening, and mother rules all!" Janz concluded, "Father and the boys will have to cultivate the beets, cut alfalfa, grow some wheat and so forth. Mother may also want a sizeable flock of chickens to look after. But what 'and so forth' means the future will have to clarify."<sup>11</sup>

B. B. Janz purchased land on long-term credit next to the farms of his brother, Jacob, and brother-in-law, Abraham Toews. Since there were no buildings on the land the Janz family spent the winter of 1927-28 in the city of Lethbridge. In the spring of 1928 an old cottage was moved to the farm and

two small rooms added. This very modest dwelling was intended as a temporary residence. As it turned out, Janz resided there until he retired from farming. He was always content with little.

In its own way Coaldale resembled the former ancestral homes of the Janz family. They had always lived in small agricultural communities, amidst their own kind, within modest circumstances. Grandfather Benjamin Tobias Janz, first in Karolswalde and then Conteniusfeld, farmed with the plough and the scythe. He was remembered for singing at his hand loom and fasting on Fridays. Father Benjamin, with strong hands and sturdy back, carried grain sacks to the top of his mill in Conteniusfeld. His piety centered around the Scriptures, one hymn tune and Hofacker's book of sermons. Though not a farmer at heart, B. B. Janz derived great pleasure from the sight of the ploughed furrow and the waving field of grain. Conservative by inclination, he responded slowly to the pressures of mechanization and the need for large building and equipment inventories. Spiritually the Bible, a few commentaries and much prayer sufficed Janz.

Meanwhile Janz, together with his relatives, planted the first crop. None of them had any knowledge of local climate or soil conditions, nor of the local weed problem. In the summer of 1928 both grain and beet fields became hopelessly infested with wild oats. If nothing else, the winter of 1928-29 proved that cattle and horses survived admirably on that volunteer crop.

Janz had to rely on credit for more than just his land purchase. He joined his brother and brothers-in-law in the purchase of a McCormick-Deering tractor and threshing machine. Because it was one of few such outfits in the area the demand for custom threshing was high. Usually the season lasted as long as the fall weather allowed. In spring and late fall the tractor was frequently used for custom ploughing. In the harvesting operations Janz found himself in a new role—he was the “separator man” (maintenance mechanic) and soon achieved a reputation for his thoroughness. Threshing never began unless he had meticulously greased and oiled the machine. For Janz and his relatives custom threshing generated a much needed cash flow and before long the machinery paid for itself. It provided another advantage. Throughout the years of its operation it required the labor of all the young men of the clan. The resulting co-operation

engendered a sense of unity and belonging and helped make pioneer life on the Canadian prairies more tolerable.<sup>12</sup>

Economic survival was not the only question confronting Janz during his first months in Canada. There was another more personal matter. His aged father had been detained in Atlantic Park, England because of an eye condition. Months passed. Again and again Benjamin senior was set aside and denied permission to leave for Canada. Janz finally appealed his father's case to high ranking friends in the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Department of Immigration. In June, 1927, the elder Janz was reunited with his wife and family. The elderly couple purchased a small house in the town of Coaldale.

For all concerned, the hardships of pioneer life became a bit more bearable thanks to the optimism and good humor of Benjamin senior. Accustomed to hard physical labor all of his life, he helped wherever he could. During threshing operations Grandfather's buggy, drawn by his lethargic horse "Mula", was a welcome sight to the hungry and thirsty men. Though approaching eighty he was still determined to shoulder as many responsibilities as possible. In a letter to David Toews, the chairman of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, Janz observed that his father was eighty years young.<sup>13</sup>

He participated fully in the life of the present. He subscribed to both Canadian [Mennonite] papers—he was well acquainted with the life of the settlement; he loved God's word and His work; he was always doing or building something; in his large yard he planted sugar beets and cared for them himself;—his memory was as precise as it was forty or fifty years ago. In his mind he kept the financial accounts of his various children more perfectly than they did on paper.<sup>14</sup>

In the same letter Janz referred to another incident in the life of his father. His aged parents had received a statement from the Board of Colonization in Rosthern explaining that their debt in Atlantic Park had been paid. Until Janz clarified the problem some days later the aging couple were under the impression that the communication from the Board was a demand for payment. When the elder Janz finally learned the truth he remarked, "Now I can die without debt, everything has turned out well."<sup>15</sup>

Grandfather Janz's death came sooner than anyone expect-



**B. B. Janz family in 1925.**

ed. On January 8, 1932, he left home to attend an evening service in the Mennonite Brethren church, about half a mile north of Coaldale. He never reached his destination. While crossing the street he was struck by a car. He died during the night of head and chest injuries.<sup>16</sup> Grandma Janz, who had come to the hospital, left prematurely when the attending physician held out some hope for her husband's recovery. Only one son, J. B. Janz, was at his father's bedside when he died.

For the B. B. Janz family and their immediate relatives the loss was deeply felt. In his funeral address the Board of Colonization representative, J. Gerbrandt, noted that in his eight years of dealing with immigrants he had never "met a more thankful, happy and content immigrant than the one in the casket."<sup>17</sup> That buoyancy would be sorely missed.

For the Janz family the new land did not solve an old problem, father's frequent absences from home. In Russia his family learned to live without him. In 1915, as a married man with children, Janz was drafted into noncombatant service and sent to do forestry work in Alt-Berdyansk. Upon his return home in 1917 he became bedridden with a serious illness. Revolution and civil war brought violence and widespread food requisitioning to the colonies, and by the first months of 1921 the Janz family was virtually without bread. Amid these circumstances Janz became chairman of the newly formed *Verband*, a post which he held until March 11, 1926. These five



years were spent in Kharkov, Moscow, or travel in the various Mennonite settlements. Effectiveness meant absence from the family, and Janz learned to place community interests before those of his family. In the end he left Russia by himself, then spent agonizing weeks in Germany waiting for his loved ones to join him.

Janz's lifestyle did not change after he arrived in Canada. He had scarcely settled his family in Winnipeg when he began to participate in the work of the Board of Colonization in Rosthern. The family had no prospects of permanent settlement, yet already the coaches of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railways were carrying him across the country. On October 21, 1926, his mother, who lived with them in Winnipeg, dispatched a terse letter to her son Jacob in Ontario. "Janz is not home. As soon as he recovered from his illness somewhat, he went to Saskatchewan for a meeting."<sup>18</sup> A month later Janz was again in Rosthern where he remained for some weeks.<sup>19</sup>

In early March, 1927, Janz left to visit Mennonite churches in the U.S. to appeal for funds to help sick and ailing newcomers in Canada, whose support the Board had underwritten. The long absence was extremely difficult for his family. "If only Benjamin would soon come home!" his mother wrote on April 9.<sup>20</sup> Towards the end of June she complained: "We are in the dark concerning Benjamin's arrival. We know of no address to send him the good news (Janz's father had arrived from Atlantic Park in England). We have waited in vain for his arrival during these days."<sup>21</sup>

Janz's family often waited in vain for his arrival, though this was possibly not true immediately after the purchase of the family farm in the Coaldale district. All operations, except for ploughing and threshing, depended on horses. This meant long hours in the fields. Animal shelters and grain storage facilities had to be erected. Mixed farming involving sugar beets meant planning field crops two or three years in advance. Irrigation, with its canals and ditches, meant around-the-clock vigil during the summer months. The rigors of a rural pioneer life demanded the strong hand of the family head and Janz responded as best he could.

During his first years in Coaldale Janz often referred to the challenge of farming in his letters. He felt an inner urge to identify with his fellow settlers, to participate as an equal in their difficulties, to be a brother in all things. Forced to settle

on a farm by the terms of the Mennonite immigration to Canada, he stayed home as much as possible and literally "put his hand to the plow." His family saw more of him in those days than in the later years. Father's presence; children as adults or young adults; the challenge of a farm bought entirely on credit—all this strengthened family unity and generated a sense of common purpose.

Even while in Coaldale Janz could not always stay at home. Approximately half a mile east of Janz's farm the Mennonite settlers of Brethren persuasion erected their church. Before long this congregation elected him as its leader. Once again the community competed with the family for Janz's time. Certainly he loved his family and his farm, but for him the call of the church was the call of God. Public service of necessity led to the neglect of the family. Janz was very much aware of that tension. When he returned home from meetings elsewhere an agenda of local church problems usually awaited him. Immigration officials, conference leaders, immigrants with problems, quarreling parishioners—all somehow arrived at Janz's small farm home near Coaldale.

Whether at home or not, Janz the new Canadian belonged to the community. It was his wife Marie who bore the brunt of that reality. Cheerfully and resolutely she functioned as housewife, mother, hostess and general manager of the entire farm. Those who knew her well never sensed any bitterness or heard a single complaint. Without her quiet determined support his public ministry would not have been possible.

## *Chapter VII*

### *Church Leader*

The Mennonites who settled in Coaldale, Alberta, during the mid-twenties came from widely separated regions in Russia. Their journey to Canada from the Ukraine, Siberia, the Crimea and Orenburg was only possible because of the vast credit extended by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The majority of the migrants brought little or no money with them and, after their arrival in Coaldale, increased their debts by purchasing land and the necessary farming equipment. A livelihood now depended on the rich, clay soil of southern Alberta and the settlers' ability to cope with new weeds and a dry, variable climate.

Fortunately the earlier Mormon settlers of the region had developed an irrigation system. As long as there was enough water good harvests were assured, but sometimes demand exceeded supply. The common challenge of the new frontier, however varied the settlers, generated considerable co-operation among them. In later years many of the pioneers nostalgically recalled the strong sense of unity and brotherhood which characterized the first years of the Coaldale settlement.

Religiously speaking, the Mennonites of the Brethren tradition faced a complex situation after they settled in Coaldale. When the movement emerged in the 1860's its adherents reacted against the liturgical formality and centralized authority of the established Mennonite Church. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Brethren congregations were characterized by a strong emphasis on local autonomy and an almost excessively democratic process within the congregation itself. Every issue and all offices, including deacons and ministers, became subject to election. Only elders were exempt, and their role was badly defined by the 1920's. In fact, no new elders were ordained. The locally

elected church leader emerged as the central authority for the congregation. The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren lacked the authority to impose standardized religious practices on individual congregations and exercised limited control over the ministers they ordained.

In Russia the vast distances between the Mennonites in the Ukraine and those of the newer settlements, especially Siberia, had ensured the evolution of distinct social, cultural and religious practices. When the Siberian, Crimean, Orenburg and Molochnaya Mennonites met in Coaldale, they held differing views on local church practices, preaching styles, the role of education, the function of ministers and elders, even the modes of celebrating weddings and funerals. The process of finding a common working basis which accommodated all the prevailing sensitivities would be a painful one. Different backgrounds and different traditions were not fused in one year!

The organizational meeting of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church took place on May 23, 1926.<sup>1</sup> When Janz joined the congregation in 1927 it had just begun to work together, though questions relating to basic organization and leadership were already solved. He began his work in the Coaldale church as a member of a committee working to establish an all-Mennonite cemetery.<sup>2</sup> By the summer of 1928 he was requested to seek a loan from the Brethren in the U.S. for a church building; attend the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America held in Hepburn; spend two months in deputation among the various emigrants scattered throughout southern Alberta.

Mid-September, 1928, brought new responsibilities for Janz. The church leader, Elder Frank Friesen, resigned because of personal circumstances.<sup>3</sup> Janz was elected to succeed him for an indefinite period. The cross-tensions of a diverse immigrant church; the leadership of an economically impoverished and debt-ridden community; individual settlers unable to cope with the demands of a new land; the intensely democratic processes of decision-making, which involved long meetings and often became very personal—all these problems now rested squarely upon his shoulders. As *Verband* leader in the Ukraine contact with his co-religionists was official and more remote. In his new role as a spiritual and community leader he lived as a settler among settlers. He could not hide his mistakes and shortcomings from the people he served. They

judged him as a neighbor, husband and father, fellow farmer and public servant. Within the context of his congregation his leadership was evaluated on a yearly basis. It was a vigorous open democracy in which men spoke their convictions and aired their disagreements. The group admonished, legislated and on occasion humiliated.

A leader was elected and expected to carry out the wishes of the congregation. For resolute and determined Janz, who successfully negotiated with Russian officialdom some five years earlier, such subjection did not come easily. At times he chaffed under the restrictions of local church leadership. Janz, however, never doubted the validity of his call and his willingness to submit himself to the congregational process for some twenty years stemmed from that conviction.

For Janz personally his affiliation with the Coaldale congregation raised some problems. He was not the same Benjamin who joined the Brethren in 1897. As a young man he was raised in a narrow, legalistic religious tradition. His drawn-out conversion at no point challenged the cultural and ethical restrictions which parents and community placed on him. As a young convert he moved easily into the theology and social ethics of the Brethren. Their teachings on conversion, baptism by immersion and the believer's church coincided with his own. At the turn of the century it was obvious to him that the Brethren possessed biblical teaching superior to that of other Mennonites and that their local churches were obviously more dynamic. Janz the proselyte proved decidedly loyal, unreservedly accepting the group's feeling of uniqueness and, to a degree smugness. He did not take seriously the charges emanating from other Mennonites that the Brethren were too exclusive and defensive. With apparent satisfaction he worked within the confines of his denomination until his election as *Verband* chairman in 1921.

During the next five years he dealt with the entire spectrum of Russian Mennonite society. Again and again he met men and women of the "old church" whose religious life was as vigorous and dedicated as his own. Granted, that church had not taught Janz much about the new life and allowed believer and unbeliever to sit on the same bench and partake of communion, but did that prevent him from fellowship with all the children of God in the Mennonite brotherhood? He became more accepting, ecumenical.

Most symbolic of the change was his occasional attendance

at the Alliance Church (*Allianz Gemeinde*) in Lichtfelde. This inter-Mennonite congregation, largely the result of small revivals, sought to minimize denominational lines by practising open communion, accepting members baptized by forms other than immersion, and striving against legalism in life style. Though he never joined the movement he remained supportive of its ministry. When members of the group in Canada found it impossible to reorganize effectively, Janz was one of the first to endorse their acceptance by the Mennonite Brethren.

For at least two decades after his arrival in Canada, Janz moved freely in the various General Conference and Brethren churches in Western Canada. He found his brothers and sisters everywhere. The local congregation which he served, restricted to one locale and preoccupied with the traumas of pioneer life, did not always share his sense of tolerance nor the breadth of his vision. Some of its members were still advocates of an earlier Brethren tradition, which carefully guarded the perimeters and avoided the new or novel. Janz would find it difficult to satisfy this segment of the community.

A broad range of problems faced the new church leader. The most immediate and critical related to the erection of a new church building. Two weeks after he assumed leadership community preparations for the erection of a church began.<sup>4</sup> Its official dedication was held on January 27, 1929. Janz, now free to focus upon the inner spiritual life of his congregation, began to work in earnest.

One of the most difficult problems facing Janz as the newly elected church leader involved the spiritual integration of his congregation. In his December, 1930, annual report he dwelt at length upon the problem. Good things were happening. No one had insisted upon particular usages and customs, "even though members came from various regions and congregations."<sup>5</sup> There were problems, however. Differences at church meetings had been "as mildew upon his soul."<sup>6</sup> During the next two years Janz continued to sense an undercurrent of disunity. There was no obvious strife, only a lack of consensus. The problem was difficult to isolate and bring into the open.

It is a rather quiet but tenacious and enduring disunity. Are there two or three groups involved and only certain brethren in each group who oppose one another? Certainly the entire congregation is not involved, not even half the

members. We are not dealing with crass, obvious instances; one can't point to this or that brother or several brethren and put the blame on them. There is no peace. Here and there brethren are withdrawing more and more; brethren are afraid to speak, and yet here and there things can be heard. Self-will and jealousy are involved, but these are not the only things.—The keeping of minutes, elections, making motions, voting—all this has become so exacting.—I never experienced such a situation in the church in Russia— 7

What was happening? Was Janz experiencing personal pressure directed against his leadership, or was he oversensitive to the normal problems connected with the integration of a diverse immigrant community? In all likelihood both issues played a role. Janz after all represented only one segment of the Mennonite community in Russia and may have unwillingly reflected the practices of the Molochnaya Mennonites. It was one thing to understand this diversity and another to create unity. "The Father in heaven has saved his very dissimilar children from destruction in Russia and purposely, not by chance, brought them together here in order that they learn to support and trust each other in peace and love." 8

Another factor was also at work. Janz had never worked with people in such a personal, direct fashion before. *Verband* leadership had been official and civic in character, with a high level of authority vested in the chairman. Janz's diplomacy, tactics and decisions were largely independent of constituency approval. Now he was only the chief executive officer of a congregation, limited by its decisions and subject to its rebuke. Its will was supreme.

There was another dimension related to Janz's early leadership which, though a part of the integration process, was more intangible. His primary task he felt, focused upon the inner spiritual growth of each member. His annual leadership reports reveal a deep concern with the problem. Janz frequently spoke of *Seelsorge* (care of souls) in reference to his pastor role. What of the individual needs of his parishioners? There was too little care for these within the congregation and "he suffered inwardly because his position as church leader made such work impossible." 9

Janz's deep concern for *Seelsorge* stemmed from his own conversion experience. As a young teacher he made his

religious peace through a lengthy inner process. Thus he knew that religious services and meetings in no way guaranteed spiritual vitality. A congregation admonished an erring member or even excommunicated, but was there a personal concern? "All in all I find it disconcerting that often no brother, no sister visited the erring one privately. . . . Surely one can expect that the Spirit of God will constrain at least some members to speak with the ailing one face to face."<sup>10</sup>

When immigrants of various economic, social and religious backgrounds crowded into the small, hastily constructed church for common worship they faced a common problem. How could parents, young people, children and infants effectively worship together? Was there a style acceptable to all? What was appropriate and reputable? What must be avoided? Janz was invited to provide some guidelines during his first year as leader. His lecture, delivered on December 27, 1931, was more than just a plea for proper behavior during church services.<sup>11</sup> Basing his remarks on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Janz, in his uniquely deliberate and specific fashion, raised a series of issues related to a Christian lifestyle and bearing.

If Paul was concerned about order at the Lord's Supper, speaking in tongues, collections, the eating of meat offered to idols, the silence of women in the churches—should we not also be concerned about the "little things"? Janz became specific. Why not follow the usher's directives? Leave the back benches empty; parents with children need them. Don't allow your children to run down the aisles. Perhaps you can enter the church more quietly. Why sit down at the end of the bench and force everyone to edge their way past you? "Do I have to mention the chattering and whispering before the service. . . . That is one of our worst habits. . . ."<sup>12</sup> If your child is restless and crying take it into the baby room. "Where are those good souls who will forego the Sunday sermon for the sake of some overwrought mother? And you mother take courage! We're not blaming you, we want to find the best way to achieve quiet, even for you. Take heart, things will get better."<sup>13</sup>

Janz addressed himself to a somewhat delicate matter which had emerged in his congregation. The majority who attended Sunday services were "simple farm people,"<sup>14</sup> poorly dressed and impoverished. They lived in what was rapidly becoming a



barter economy. Neither fathers, mothers nor sons had access to ready cash, but the daughters working in Lethbridge did. As domestics in wealthier households they were naturally exposed to the latest styles. One simply had to be fashionable. The new dress came either from Eatons department store or as a gift from the mistress who employed them. Naturally the attire could only be worn on Sunday morning. The immigrant community, until recently used to the somber clothes of the Russian Mennonite village, could hardly be expected to appreciate the stylish clothes of the early 1930's. What about appropriate dress?

We know that Jesus did not prescribe any clothing style, not his own nor that of his generation, as essential for salvation. No clothing today is the same as Jesus' day, not even the most unassuming, not even that of the Hutterites or Amish. That of course represents the extreme right. On the other hand when one tries to draw attention to oneself by over or underdressing it is vanity and conceit on the part of both sexes. One of the common, everyday ways of expressing the arrogance of the heart is through luxuriant clothes adorned with pearls and gold.<sup>15</sup>

Was the church really the place for the latest fashions from Paris, asked Janz—that center dominated by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life? Read I Tim. 2:9, whether in German, Russian or English, it implies decent, moderate dress. Try to remember that, young lady.<sup>16</sup>

A major crisis in Janz's role as church leader erupted late in 1933. As in previous years, his annual report reflected a concern for the lack of unity. "No specific cases can be cited, one cannot say this or that is the cause. There is nothing tangible which can be expedited. The congregation itself is good, but its pulse is abnormal; something is lacking."<sup>17</sup> Janz felt the problem lay with him personally and invited the congregation to discuss the question. Some members felt his leadership style was too pompous and unspiritual. He was insensitive in his dealings with certain people and found it difficult to subject himself to others. Still others complained of a tendency towards ecclesiastical politics.<sup>18</sup>

The criticisms again reflected Janz the *Verband* diplomat of the 1920's. He was sure of himself and perhaps not given to excessive consultation. A calm unobtrusive public bearing at



Benjamin and Maria Janz in 1951.

times obscured his determination and resolve. As a gesture of mild censure the congregation observed that "on occasion Janz has been too intent on promoting and implementing his own viewpoint."<sup>19</sup>

Seen in retrospect, the crises facing Janz's congregation certainly went beyond the issue of his personality and leadership tactics. Congregational discussions relating to the question of unity raised a number of additional perspectives. There was the question of biblical interpretation. Members of the congregation and the church council had grown up in different regions in Russia and so acquired different insights as to the meaning of Scripture. A similar variety of concepts concerning what constituted the ideal Christian life prevailed. There were "differences in the comprehension of truth (Erkenntnis), [some emphasized] law, [others] grace."<sup>20</sup>

Here lay a tension which had long plagued the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. A Russian Mennonite ethnicity, born of closed community, dictated the acceptable lifestyle. Opposed to this was the Brethren emphasis on the vitality of the personal religious experience, which historically rejected excessive external form. If, as some argued, law and orthodoxy had gained the upper hand, a struggle to regain the

vision of the founding fathers was inevitable. In subsequent years when Janz spoke of the need for repentance and new life, and invited outside speakers to hold special services, he aimed at redressing the balance between law and grace. Grace, after all, was most important to the inner spiritual progress of each member. To the casual observer the situation appeared somewhat baffling. Janz, conservative and austere in his personal bearing, combating excessive legalism in his congregation! Certainly he insisted on narrow rather than broad guidelines for the Christian life, but far more important was the question of the individual pilgrimage.

Janz was obviously bothered by the attack on his leadership. The congregation had informed him that he was too intent on promoting his own views. "But they have not said if these views are right or wrong."<sup>21</sup> He had asked himself if a leader, provided he has the correct views, can indeed promote them too strongly. "He was unable," Janz continued, "to imagine a leader who is only an address, to whom other people send their views."<sup>22</sup> It was obviously time for him to step down. Reluctantly the church accepted his resignation and elected an interim leader.<sup>23</sup>

A year later Janz was again elected church leader by a large majority. He refused to accept the office.<sup>24</sup> When questioned about his decision he admitted feeling a sense of responsibility towards the congregation but had become "exhausted, utterly exhausted."<sup>25</sup> When the interim leader became ill a short time later Janz again faced the same question. Once more he refused to accept the post. He finally agreed to assume the leadership in May, 1935, whereupon the congregation immediately reinstated him.

Why had Janz resigned? Why did he resist re-election? His leadership offended some segments of the congregation. When Janz requested a frank discussion of the issue, long-standing tensions broke into the open. Criticism became personal and direct: his personal relationship with certain of the brethren left something to be desired; he lacked humility; he acted in a high-handed fashion; he was insensitive to other viewpoints. Janz felt the attacks focused upon his person, not only his leadership, and decided to withdraw. The heterogeneous immigrant population needed someone less demanding, less direct.

Early in 1935 Janz encountered North American-style evangelism for the first time. Chas Neighbour began to hold

services in the Coaldale community hall. Here was singing and preaching in the language of the new land, a language with which the sons and daughters of the immigrants eagerly identified. They did not want to be different! The new songs and rhythms; the use of instruments; the confident, emotional and humor-laced sermons; the dramatic shouting and pulpit pounding. This was obviously the novel way one evangelized in the "other culture." By contrast the religious style of the average Mennonite, struggling to apply the precepts of the Gospel to the everyday world of an irrigation farm, appeared rather dull and mundane. "Being saved" and "witnessing" was a dynamic Christianity when compared with congregation's agonies about inter-personal relations or other common problems. Chas Neighbour and those who followed in his footsteps began to separate father from son. How could father evaluate the Christian quality of evangelism in another language and culture?

Janz at first endorsed the venture. After all, it helped to evangelize the region, and if Mennonites participated, it would help to narrow the gap between "us and them."<sup>26</sup> Why not give Neighbour the lodging and piano he requested from the Mennonite Brethren church. Janz's support for the new evangelism was short-lived, especially when several young men from his congregation began to conduct "English-style" services, imitating techniques learned from the visitors. There was nothing wrong with the songs or the testimonies presented at the meetings, Janz argued, but wasn't it extraordinary that "our brethren preach the Gospel to our young people at a strange place and in a foreign tongue?"<sup>27</sup> The visiting evangelists who frequently spoke at *Joyful Hours*, in his opinion, left much to be desired. They came, preached, prayed and left. What of their sharp criticism of the conventional church; of their frivolous banter during the sermon; of their dramatic stances and gestures; of their constant pleas for money? Janz sensed the meetings presented a frothy Gospel which, thanks to brazen evangelists manipulating mob psychology, threatened to separate the old and young within the Mennonite community. He believed in the innate power of the Christian message. It needed no embellishment or special technique to make it effective, so why an evangelism separate from the life of the local congregation?

As we shall see in the next chapter, Janz was deeply interested in the spiritual processes at work within the local

congregation. The church was a place for redemption and restoration, a community which dealt with alienation, hostility and strife. It was a place for healing. It never arrived at perfection, but was always becoming. Basic to its life process was discussion, admonition, interaction and outright correction. For Janz there was only the church visible, a community of real people, faced with the common problems of living together. His Coaldale congregation was no exception.

The productivity of clay soil in the Coaldale district depended on the availability of water. Most of Janz's congregation consisted of farmers, often living next to one another and relying on the same limited water supply. When one brother took more than his share Janz expected the community to deal with him. Such a direct approach was singularly effective. "It is noteworthy," he reported in 1937, "that no differences regarding water distribution were reported to the church leadership during the past summer and fall."<sup>28</sup>

There were naturally many other issues that had to be similarly dealt with. During the first years of the settlement the Hutterian Brethren supplied the impoverished immigrants with grain. It was now the end of 1937 and some had not repaid this generosity. "I'm deeply disturbed that the grace of God has been abused in this particular instance. . . . Our brethren did not go there, but they came here and were shamefully treated. After such a good crop and after their waiting for so many years. . . . We are deeply ashamed, it is a pain and disgrace for the entire church. The question will be dealt with. . . ."<sup>29</sup> and it was dealt with. Restitution and appropriate apologies eventually followed.

It was not surprising that the debt question weighed heavily upon Janz's congregation. The basic issue was not that of interim credit, such as that advanced by the Hutterites or by one farmer to another. Virtually the entire congregation faced the question of *Reiseschuld* (travel debt). Collectively and individually the immigrants owed the Canadian Pacific Railway thousands upon thousands of dollars. Some repaid conscientiously, others reluctantly. The *Reiseschuld* not only involved Janz as a member of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonisation, but also as a pastor who was concerned with the integrity of his members.

The late 1930's brought increasing prosperity, but some still refused to pay. Corrective measures were needed and Janz

didn't hesitate. The congregation was informed that the church council sought its endorsement "to awaken a sleeping *Reiseschuld* conscience where necessary, especially in cases where material prosperity is in evidence."<sup>30</sup> Janz observed that it was time "to deal with this question energetically."<sup>31</sup> Not long after, a large new church was built and dedicated on July 2, 1939. Shortly thereafter the new structure hosted the North American General conference of the Mennonite Brethren. The real miracle of 1939, observed in his annual report, "was the building of the new church."<sup>32</sup> There was, however, an old problem which the church still had to solve.

Can one speak of [the operation] of God's grace in this Brethren congregation with regard to paying off the *Reiseschuld*? This is our weakest area. Here we must deeply humble ourselves. Throughout the land, whether Brethren, whether converted people, whether another congregation—apparently there is no difference—there is little conscience. When someone is guilty in other matters, possibly minor sins like smoking, he will be admonished, perhaps excommunicated. We deal similarly with one who becomes intoxicated or who steals. Some lack simple human honesty but the congregation does not see this. God help us. . . . But we still have [people with] faithful consciences in this regard, they come [and pay]; others are in financial straits, they will come. Not all will come, however.<sup>33</sup>

Janz's admonition apparently helped. By 1941 the debt was sizeably reduced.<sup>34</sup> Later that year a special re-organization of the Coaldale district for the express purpose of facilitating the *Reiseschuld* collection was undertaken.<sup>35</sup> It received Janz's full support. There were several more years of sustained effort. The last payment of \$1,335.00 on behalf of the Coaldale district was finally made early in 1946. A priority spanning more than two decades had been resolved.

Janz once described 1939 as the most "extraordinary year in the life of the congregation since its founding in 1926."<sup>36</sup> A large new church stood complete; the congregation hosted the General Conference; seven couples were ordained to various ministries; large baptisms brought many young people into the church. All these were triumphs, yet never in its history had the congregation faced such "dark and serious prospects when entering upon a new year."<sup>37</sup> The world was at war. Who



Maria Janz with one of her grandchildren in 1955.

knew what the future held or what pressures nonresistant Mennonites faced? A strong regional antagonism against the German-speaking minority surfaced immediately after the outbreak of the war. With a good sense of timing and strategy Janz placed an article in the *Lethbridge Herald* clarifying Mennonite identity and explaining their historic pacificism.<sup>38</sup> It may well have been responsible for lessening anti-German fanaticism which in other areas of Alberta saw the burning of two Mennonite churches.

The Second World War generated two new problems for the intrepid pacifist. It was essential to secure legal recognition for the nonresistant position on the national level. This also implied the establishment of procedures and agencies whereby the principle could find concrete expression. As we shall see in a later chapter Janz became deeply involved with the Department of National Defence in Ottawa, as well as with the processing of western Canadian conscientious objectors into an alternative service program. Janz's second problem related to the application of the peace principle within the confines of his congregation. The Coaldale church leader never tired of reiterating the basic principle underlying Mennonite opposition to war. "B. B. Janz warns the young brethren to be vigilant.

Shedding human blood is sin and whoever forgets this [and does so] comes into conflict with the church."<sup>39</sup> Young men of military age heard those words again and again in 1939-40, both from the pulpit and during church business meetings. Only in May, 1941, did the Canadian government finally announce a definite alternative service program for conscientious objectors. Until then local Mobilisation Boards examined each candidate separately to "test" the sincerity of his conviction. This procedure often placed the unexposed, tongue-tied Mennonite farm boys in a difficult position, but Janz urged the young men of his congregation to take a strong stand, come what may.

Among the young people a deeply held conviction is essential, namely that the shedding of blood is a great sin. Further, a special directive is necessary as to how they express their conviction: the determination to suffer if forced to take a weapon, to suffer if this means ridicule, disfranchisement or imprisonment. . . . Then we expect a pious lifestyle [from them] as conscientious objectors. It must be clear that anyone who joins the active forces automatically excommunicates himself from the congregation.<sup>40</sup>

Nonresistance meant more than not joining the army for an Anabaptist like Janz. Like many of his forefathers he faced the dilemma of indirect participation in conflict via war bonds, or even less obvious means. What of scrap metal drives? What of certain crops? What of war construction projects? Local tradesmen naturally took advantage of the higher wages offered at such sites. Under Janz's leadership the church took a firm position on the issue. "The congregation regrets that several of our Brethren participate in the construction of war projects and thereby have violated the principle of nonresistance. The congregation is firmly against this [practice] and finds it is not compatible with our nonresistant stance."<sup>41</sup> Painstakingly the community tried to determine whether flax or sugar beets could be grown without contributing directly to the war effort. What were other churches doing? What should Coaldale do? It was a question of obvious profit versus principle and in the end principle prevailed. Flax, so obviously a part of the war effort, would not be planted by the Brethren of Coaldale.<sup>42</sup>

Pacifist Janz believed in a positive rather than negative



approach to nonviolence. Help where there is suffering and need. If the knitted sock was intended to give warmth and the Red Cross handed one pair to a freezing soldier and another to a naked child, did it really matter? Already in October, 1939, the church elected a committee of four ladies to co-ordinate sewing and knitting for the Red Cross.<sup>43</sup> Collections for the organization were held regularly. Christians were called to heal the wounds of war. Pacifists did this at home or on the front lines if necessary. Active Christian love and mercy never judged the morality of the recipient. For a time Janz even headed a small local committee which sent parcels to needy Canadian soldiers. The Coaldale church also held special collections for the destitute wives or widows of the military. He certainly condemned the sin, but never the sinner. In the later war years, when a CO status depended on certification as a Mennonite, he supplied many such documents. When asked if an unconverted Mennonite was eligible for such exemption, Janz replied, "I'll give it to him. I won't make any Mennonite shoot."<sup>44</sup> Shooting would be sin for a conscience trained not to kill.

Janz's duties as church leader were as varied as human experience. During the first years of settlement he traveled throughout Alberta giving advice and comfort to the new immigrants, many of whom lived in comparative isolation. In Coaldale itself Janz's buggy, drawn by one horse, became a common sight. There was also a commonly heard expression related to that buggy. "I see the plough is operating out your way, but its standing again at Janz's farm."<sup>45</sup> A neglected farm because he worked for others!

Where did the buggy take him? At times to settle a domestic quarrel or bring reconciliation between father and son or inform an aged, penniless couple that the church would look after their needs. On other occasions he visited alienated brethren bickering about water rights; the embittered who felt the community rejected them; the covetous who refused to pay their debts, the public sinners who had offended the congregation; the bereaved who had lost husband or wife.<sup>46</sup> After these many hours there were still the long congregational meetings. The hours and days away from family and farm were never counted.

What motivated Janz, a man well into middle age, to cope with the pressures of leading a large and varied congregation for some twenty years? Was it a desire for power and

community status? Nowhere does Janz's vast correspondence suggest this. Certainly he fought for the preservation of practices dear to his heart or for keeping committees with obvious and decisive functions. The various records he left behind, especially his letters, contained vigorous arguments and severe words. Now and then obvious ambition was evident. Politics designed to place him on a desired committee or win a key policy decision were not unknown. Janz was certainly capable of ecclesiastical diplomacy, but collectively viewed, such tactics were rarely used. In the end the various explanations for Janz's dynamic must be discounted in favor of one concept—his view of what constituted the ideal church. Janz's thinking on the church was the single most important element in his theology. Most of his activity stemmed from this overriding conviction.

## Chapter VIII

### *What Is The Church?*

A key term in Janz's concept of the church was the German word *Gemeinde*. Its connotations were broad, implying community, congregation and in a secular sense municipality. From the standpoint of Janz's Russian experience, *Gemeinde* implied the village in which he grew up, the Mennonite Brethren congregation which he joined as a young man, and the larger Christian community in which he worked as VBBH chairman.

The church of Janz's youth was a cultural-religious community and most of the village belonged to the church. There was a passive acceptance of a traditional church order and leadership. Though this structure misled and blinded him in his initial spiritual quest, he never rejected it as a totally ineffective expression of the church. He knew too many deeply spiritual leaders and members within the Mennonite *Volkskirche* (parish church) tradition. His parents lived and died in the context of *Volkskirche* and he didn't doubt the validity of their religious experience or their sense of commitment. There were thousands of Russian Mennonites like them, and Janz's vision of the brotherhood embraced them all. In the broader sense *Gemeinde* for Janz always implied an identifiable, concrete company of living persons contending with good and evil.

In his personal spiritual pilgrimage, however, Janz rejected the *Volkskirche* and came to view the church as a voluntary fellowship of believers. Fortunately acceptance of the one did not imply the complete exclusion of the other. Janz worked with all the brethren of Anabaptist descent whether, in his estimation, they had regained the vision of their forefathers or lost portions of it to *Volkskirche*. Broadminded, tolerant, ecumenical Janz emerges again and again in his letters. He never rejected his "unenlightened" co-religionists after his new

life experience. On the other hand, Janz was a frequent apologist for the uniqueness of the Mennonite Brethren.

Why this paradoxical stance? Was Janz dishonest? Was he so anxious for power in the Mennonite world that he developed political roles to suit the occasion? Paradoxical, yes, but also an honest reflection of the two world's represented in Janz's personal spiritual evolution. From the standpoint of his family and his own religious upbringing, he elected an alien form of baptism and a radical type of church structure. There was a sharp discontinuity between the parish style church he left and the voluntary, brotherhood type community he joined. At that stage his mother preferred to "bury him" rather than experience his affiliation with the Mennonite Brethren. Janz saw it as the only free church alternative in the context of the Russian Mennonite world. As he later expressed it, "I received a distinct impression of its character: of brotherly fellowship; fear of God; a healthy appetite for the Word; of a sincere quickening preaching; of work with the faltering one. . . ."<sup>1</sup> According to Janz, the Mennonite Brethren of 1896 "had the respect of all upright men, especially the God-fearing Mennonites who desired new life, or others that already possessed it and lamented that their churches were so far removed from this in faith, conduct and practice."<sup>2</sup>

These spiritual characteristics of the Brethren in 1896, which enticed Janz to join them, directly influenced his thinking on the nature of the church. The stress on fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*), discipline and the visibility of church is everywhere evident in his sermons, articles and letters. If an order of priority can be assigned to the various components of Janz's view of the church, fellowship emerges as an obvious first choice.

His view of fellowship closely approximated the New Testament concept of *koinonia*, thanks in part to the similar connotations of the German word *Gemeinschaft*. As a young believer in the Brethren church he sensed a belonging together and an intense sharing of all life experience. This participation in a common life became all-encompassing. The vitality of the church was determined by the pulse of the social relationships within this community. Certainly *Gemeinschaft* referred to a life with God and implied the outpouring of God's grace upon the church. For Janz, however, the practical test of that relationship lay in the quality of the common life which the recipients of grace participated in. In this sense the *Volkskirche*

of his youth was incapable of fostering true *Gemeinschaft*. His ecumenical inclinations notwithstanding, it was always this dimension which upset Janz when he encountered appeals for inter-Mennonite co-operation.

"Is here really an inner bond; common joys or common sorrow; common growth; a common agonizing for souls?" he wrote to a General Conference friend in South America. "Is there not always the question of church affiliation? Is there not a greater competition for this than for the new life?" he continued. The key issue was implicit. "The intimate fellowship around the Lord's Table—separate! It can't be otherwise, for some participants are not clear on the new life."<sup>3</sup>

*Gemeinschaft* was only possible in the context of the free church. "... Originally the Mennonite Brethren Church was founded as a believing church and most surely only the converted were accepted and are now being accepted. . . . That was the principle of our fathers; that is the way we stand today. . . . As soon as this biblical principle fails we are *Volkskirche*, no longer the believing church."<sup>4</sup>

Janz viewed with askance any practice which made church affiliation automatic or ignored a personal new life experience. "The worthy brother and minister Peter Unruh used to say that in so many families one already knew that the child in the crib would join the church between ages of seventeen to twenty-one. That is *Volkskirche*. In the believer's church it is entirely different, for here the [spiritual] future of the child can in no way be determined."<sup>5</sup> The spiritually alive and the spiritually dead could not be united under any circumstances. "In the past, in the old homeland, it was impossible to reform such a mixture."<sup>6</sup>

In Janz's literary legacy there is little interpretive comment concerning the function of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the life of the church. It was implicit that neither ceremony possessed any inherent power or sacramental quality; both depended on the inner attitude of the individual.<sup>7</sup> He had only one basic concern: that such practices reflect the churches new life experience and in no way contribute to the formation of *Volkskirche* by becoming formal or liturgical in character. When asked to evaluate a ministerial handbook for use in South America Janz took rather strong exception to the mention of child dedication. "It is not directly child baptism, but a halfway ecclesiastical act which seeks to take charge or mark the child for the church."<sup>8</sup> If as adults these children

enter godless ways what has been accomplished? A reference to formal baptismal instruction brought to mind the church of Janz's youth. If the concern revolved about the candidates personal confession of faith, why teach him the right words to say in public? Make sure there are no unconfessed sins; visit and talk to the candidate before baptism—these were the essentials.<sup>9</sup>

### *Dynamics of Gemeinschaft*

What did Janz see as the basic working dynamic in *Gemeinschaft*? Every human community needed its institutions, organizations, delegated bodies and agencies, and Janz participated fully on all these levels. *Gemeinschaft*, however, only became real when Christians met together and communicated their common faith, spoke about their inner experience, shared their concerns and needs. While fellowship was not limited to the local congregation, its deepest expression occurred when members communicated interpersonally, submitted to each other and resolved to collectively observe certain standards of conduct and service.

"But as a Mennonite Brethren Conference we are a family of the Lord, which the Lord entrusted with special truths over ninety years ago. . . . As such a family we regulate all concerns related to growth, the care of souls, teaching, educating and also, as the Lord has given us insight, serious admonition according to the Word. . . . In this we are not steeped in formalism, but are open to every constructive teaching of the Word and search with the wise men 'if these things be so'."<sup>10</sup>

In the life of the church *Gemeinschaft* implied that the well-being of each member became the concern of all. This meant not only adequate nurture leading to positive growth but also the restoration of the erring brother by the loving community surrounding him. In Janz's thinking nurture and church discipline were closely linked. Mutual communication within the community of believers ideally took place in the context of church services and ideally featured several forms of participation. "Thank you for the insight into your communion service," he wrote to a friend. "Except for the missing few, the entire church: the good prayer session and sermon; the confessions and testimonies in the presence of the Lord's Table."<sup>11</sup>

A South American congregation, about to move into a new building, was admonished to "hold a few extra services for self-examination with contrition and repentance. Don't take any of the old dust and dirt with you. Get rid of the old sour leaven. Then the lighthouse has bright lamps and clean glass."<sup>12</sup> Writing to the same church some months later he was again concerned about the vital spiritual processes taking place within the new building. "Oh that any lost people might bow here in repentance and become happy children of God. Oh that strife and jealousy, pride and self-seeking remain far from all discussions in these hallowed walls; instead may love and humility stand high—the best recognition symbols of all true Jesus disciples."<sup>13</sup>

In Janz's view the key element making the believer's church redemptive and restorative in character was repentance (Busse). Inevitably Janz related it to Christian renewal (Neubelebung). The church strives for holiness, sanctification and purification within the dynamic of its own community. Periodic penance was essential to the pursuit of holiness. "Today it appears to me that a series of meetings with earnest repentance sermons be held at one location," he observed to a visiting minister in South America. "All shall come closer to the Lord, the conscience sharpened and repentance done."<sup>14</sup> One could build churches, carry on a broad evangelism program but forget purification, penance and confession.<sup>15</sup> "Brother Foth, before you build, check your faith and conduct and deeply humble yourself before the Lord seeking an obedient heart. Then all will be different."<sup>16</sup>

Regardless how redemptive the community of believers sought to be, two problems always remained: members quarreled and became alienated; individuals sinned and needed healing. Either problem involved confession, reconciliation and restitution to the community. Obstinacy or refusal to engage in these processes ultimately meant exclusion from the fellowship.

### *Alienation and Reconciliation*

Janz's approach to the first problem was simplistic: when brothers or sisters fought they must be reconciled. Nowhere did his views on reconciliation find better expression than in his South American ministry in 1947 and in the subsequent correspondence with Mennonite church leaders in the southern

continent. Penance and public confession were basic to Janz's ministry in South America. Reflecting on his experience a few years later he wrote:

At that time everything was so split it seemed incurable. The split segments of the Mennonite Brethren Church opposed each other more sharply than other churches [General Conference]. How great was the accumulation of guilt against each other and the Lord Jesus: then too self-righteousness and blindness about oneself. Praise and thanks to God all was overcome through the blood of the Lamb, naturally with deep repentance and contrition.<sup>17</sup>

The church was crippled if leaders worked at cross-purposes. Whenever Janz sensed alienation or obvious quarreling he became direct and personal in his approach, even if it involved himself. In 1923 a misunderstanding arose between Janz as VBHH chairman and A. A. Friesen, a member of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. When it became apparent that the basic conflict involved personal differences, Janz was quick to take the initiative. "Today we live and are; today I want to clear the slate with you!" he wrote to Friesen. "... I will not spare myself, but rather I want to be in favor of what is true and good—even if this means humiliation."<sup>18</sup> Until the end of his days he always viewed personal conflicts as one of the greatest detriments to *Gemeinschaft*. An open approach best solved all factionalism. "In point of fact a black cat has run between you two brethren. . . . I can't imagine your daddy would have acted as you have. I'm writing . . . as an older brother to my brethren."<sup>19</sup> Another brother was invited to consider what he had done. "Don't you think you've been too hard on the brother? This will haunt this deacon as a shadow in his holy ministry. Give him a good word so that all is manifest and free."<sup>20</sup>

Janz was never interested in a negotiated diplomatic peace. Only direct, personal acts of forgiveness between individuals restored harmony within the congregation. "If both of you make your peace in the truth," he told one brother, "no one else really has anything to say; it is your personal matter. . . . Make peace, dear brother, not a rotten one, but a truly brotherly one where all is put away and can't crop up again."<sup>21</sup> A minister's attack upon a colleague prompted a note from Janz which tersely analyzed the implications of such strife. "It is our great human calamity that various members



of the same large Mennonite family on the journey to eternity grievously misunderstand one another, severely reproach one another, deeply injure love and probably also truth; to the detriment of themselves and the younger churches—not to speak of generations.”<sup>22</sup>

Janz's response to anyone sincerely seeking reconciliation was deep and heartfelt. In the years when the collection of *Reiseschuld* from depression-ridden immigrants was such a difficult task the Board's agents were occasionally subjected to verbal abuse. Years later one brother regretted his actions and requested forgiveness, only to learn that the agent had passed away. Janz wrote to his widow on behalf of the penitent:

You have always been able to look into the heart of your husband, how he felt about situations such as this, especially when he died. . . . Could you in your name and that of your departed husband clarify his position and say a few words bout his confident departure? I think it would do that unknown friend good.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Erring Brother*

Janz's view of *Gemeinde* and *Gemeinschaft* not only encompassed the problem of alienation and reconciliation, but the question of the erring brother as well. He held no illusions about the fallibility and humanity of the church. The work of the Holy Spirit took place in the context of the human community, but this did not raise it above the normal processes operational in society. The church was only as vital and real as its individual members. Janz never spoke of the church mystical or invisible. His spiritual sisters and brothers lived in time and space and constituted a fellowship in which admonishment, an open sharing of views and even debate were normal forms of expression. Each individual personally chose to enter the brotherhood of Christ and work in that setting. What if he stopped working and the community of which he was a part continued to act and speak in love to him but achieved no positive result. The sinner still remained impenitent. At what point must he be excluded from the fellowship?

Janz, the product of an ethnocentric Russian village and a small rural town on the Canadian prairies, might have been expected to draw narrow, legalistic guidelines for church discipline. His constant emphasis on repentance in the life of

the church perhaps suggests a stern inflexible approach to the problem. Careful examination of Janz's correspondence on the question of church discipline, however, suggests a restorative, not punitive approach. Reflecting upon the expulsion of a brother, he commented: "One brother from Hillsboro wrote that it was good we were rid of him. I can't say that. It would have been a full victory of the Cross of Calvary if a complete reconciliation had taken place, if one rejoined the ranks and worked fully together in heartfelnness and humility."<sup>24</sup>

Love must be focused on the erring brother. "... if you or others could project a ray of love in your conversations with him. Oh that the brother experiences Jesus' love above all things but also brotherly love and in deep repentance comes home."<sup>25</sup> Janz was never afraid to confront the sinner with his sin and invite him to do penance, but in doing so emanated "a ray of love." In one moving letter he pleaded:

May I once more come to my lonely brother in the quiet room, press his hand and look in his eye and see how things are, and ask "Do you too wish to leave the Lord Jesus? Do you still love Him?" Together we deeply humble ourselves before our Savior and pray the eighty-fifth Psalm from the depths of our soul . . . and remind ourselves how previously you were the happiest man on earth and openly served with that first, overflowing love.<sup>26</sup>

When all attempts to love and restore failed, however, the community must exercise discipline. The New Testament, with its references to Demas, Ananias and the Laodiceans, allowed no compromise. "If the facts of the case pertain to moral, social and economic issues, the Holy Scriptures lead us, as the Church of God, towards the excommunication of such a sinner, and that without compromises. As a church you will carry this through at your next meeting, based upon passages of Holy Scripture which you know well."<sup>27</sup>

Janz's tone of love and concern for the erring brother took on a more uncompromising stance when it concerned the trespasses of ministers. "Churches stand and fall with their ministers," he wrote. "In my concern with this question I have not only asked what our old fathers believed and taught, but especially what the Holy Scriptures say about the service and walk of the shepherds and teachers."<sup>28</sup> Pauls letters to

Timothy and Titus set the norms for ministers and deacons. Those norms established a clear priority:

Whether they are to become ministers or deacons, the demand is that they be above reproach and remain above reproach. . . . According to 1 Timothy 3:10 investigate and prove first, then allow to serve if of blameless reputation. That also means not to serve if not above reproach. Being blameless and remaining blameless is the guideline for the service of the brethren. Where that is lacking, according to the letters of Timothy and Titus, there is no service. The founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church also understood it this way.<sup>29</sup>

What if a minister has served, sinned or lived in sin; is excommunicated from the fellowship; repents and is reinstated? Whether he can be a brother or not was a question of the local church, but his continued role as a minister was another question. "A blameless reputation and not forgiveness determines service. The good reputation . . . is tied to an irreproachable walk, not upon a forgiveness for a sinful act or a life of sin."<sup>30</sup> For Janz talent and ability was secondary to faithful service. The good news was to be given to "faithful men," according to 2 Timothy 2:2, and not all talented men were faithful. There was really only one scriptural criterion for ministers: faithful men of blameless reputation.

A church or a conference seriously errs when it considers ability first and faithfulness second. "You good and faithful servant" applies both to the servant with five and two talents. A church or conference undermines its future if it neglects the principle of Holy Scripture that blameless determines the calling of a servant and his remaining in service. No church elects a brother as a servant of God that fails again and again, lives in sin and has a love for sin.<sup>31</sup>

Janz's intolerant stance on the question of erring ministers was possibly determined by his strong views on the visibility of the church. The Christians inner experience produced a man or woman identifiable by lifestyle. There was no retreat to a life of contemplation and withdrawal. As the church believed and obeyed its Master, it became a living, visible church concretely influencing the society of which it was a part. Public sins on the part of its members, especially its leaders,

seriously jeopardized the credibility of its witness. While the *Gemeinde* was obliged to love and to restore, it was equally constrained to expel those who wilfully and continuously tarnished its testimony.

Janz's view of the church made heavy demands upon its local leadership. These shepherds after all were responsible for forging its inner and outer image. He favored a gradual election to the ministry. Let the young man preach now and again and so force him to search the Scriptures; let his candidacy be a long one; above all let the *Gemeinde* decide whether the call was of God; following all this some formal training was perhaps in order.

In his own church at Coaldale Janz carefully searched for young men with promise. "Maybe the Lord will give you a few words for us," Janz suggested to a young man. "Remember how I once pushed you behind the pulpit," he reminded him some years later when he was pursuing a formal ministerial training.<sup>32</sup> By that time the church had called him as a minister-elect. When several potential candidates were rejected by the local church Janz, in his calm, unruffled manner, remarked: "Well, it looks like you'll have to wait a little while."<sup>33</sup> It was important that a young minister prove himself. Janz's letters frequently employed the word *Bewährung* (a proving or probation), implying that the young minister must demonstrate his worthiness.

Janz was especially interested in any potential ministers in the South American Mennonite Churches. "How poor is the church that has only old ministers and prepared no young recruits," he wrote to an elderly minister.<sup>34</sup> With an old friend in Brazil he was more direct: "You have, according to my knowledge, no young recruits for the ministry. Oh [you] poor church! Please make arrangements for the future. . . ."<sup>35</sup>

He took a direct personal interest in any potential ministers. One South American candidate received a book of Spurgeon's sermons from Janz—together with a few instructions:

Don't follow them literally or memorize them. Read them for your edification, and if something is especially important note it on paper. Always have paper for notes if you read other books or the Bible. If you want to preach a sermon . . . don't make it too long. A beginner should not hold long sermons and not repeat himself in the sermon. See to it that you thoroughly say what you have

to say only once. Note some of the points of a Spurgeon sermon, but not all of them. Leave out the difficult ones, perhaps they'll come after several years. Don't become dull—this will make your listeners dull and tire them. They shouldn't think—when will he stop.<sup>36</sup>

A few years later such elementary instructions were unnecessary but there were other guidelines. "It has pleased God and men (His church) to give you the task of being a shepherd and a teacher. Does the shepherd search and live the Scriptures more than all his church members, bend his knees more in prayer and supplication, fills his heart more with the love of Christ than anyone else?"<sup>37</sup> Why not sit down at the feet of Paul and study 1 and 2 Timothy as well as Titus—slowly, covering small portions at a time. This was most important, for no church could rise above its minister.



**B. B. Janz at work in his garden (1956).**

## Chapter IX

### *In Pursuit Of The Times*

In addition to his duties as church leader during the 1930's and 1940's, Janz contended with three major problems in the broader context of Canadian Mennonitism. The issues almost defined themselves chronologically. With Hitler's rise in Germany the question of National Socialism became of crucial importance to many Russian Mennonites in Canada. As world tensions reached a breaking point in 1938-39 a second concern emerged, that of a nonresistant German-speaking minority in Canada. Janz's involvement in this area somewhat corresponded to his *Verband* experience in Russia. There was extensive travel, massive correspondence, and the pleading of many special cases before government officials. When the war ended Janz faced a third problem. More than a decade ago he had warned his fellow immigrants to expect a rapid linguistic and cultural shift. Now, in the mid-twentieth century this process was more or less complete.

National Socialism and cultural change probably affected Janz's person more directly than did nonresistance. As a pacifist he was upholding an old Anabaptist-Mennonite stance, a principle central to Mennonite theology. There was no need for debate or long discussion. As we shall see in the next chapter Janz saw himself as an executor of a heritage. The other two issues evolved more gradually and were more subtle. Their implications for his people remained uncertain.

#### *National Socialism*

During the decades prior to 1917 Russian Mennonites established a strong cultural link with Germany. It was not only forged by the export of students to German Bible schools and universities, but by the import of school texts and religious literature as well. Once in North America, the

immigrants' preference for German publications continued. Advertisements in periodicals like *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* guaranteed easy access to theological and devotional literature for many of the new settlers. As typical immigrants they clung to the old and known culture, and knowledge of their new land or world events often came only via *Der Bote* or *Die Rundschau*.

Following Hitler's rise to power, a small number of pro-Nazi Mennonites capitalized on this narrow cultural and religious exposure by promoting the idea of a Mennonite destiny intertwined with the aspirations of the Third Reich. Again and again the virtues of the German character and the achievements of the German race were lauded. These proponents of *Deutschtum* (Germanism) were aided by Dr. H. Seelheim, the German consul for western Canada. In carefully planned campaigns he solicited National Socialist support from German settlers in the West by distributing books and inaugurating an annual "German Day" where possible. The Mennonites, he declared, shared in both the teutonic past and future since their origins, as history now proved, were predominantly German, not Dutch. A few Mennonites, captivated by the promises of a new destiny, actually migrated to Germany.

At least one other dimension fostered pro-Germanism among Canadian Mennonites. In 1929-30 German entry visas saved some five thousand Russian Mennonites from Siberian exile when they fled to Moscow to escape forced collectivization. The German government housed and fed them while they searched for a permanent home. The majority of these refugees never forgot this benevolence.

By 1934 there were some 25,000 Mennonites in Canada and Paraguay who lost loved ones and possessions to the Bolshevik Revolution. In this context Hitler's gospel of *Blut und Boden* not only fostered an intense German nationalism, but promised to defend German minorities abroad. Mennonites could identify with both Hitler's anti-Bolshevism as well as his veiled assurances to vindicate past wrongs committed against Germans outside of Germany. After the outbreak of the Second World War such propaganda in the Paraguayan Mennonite colonies actually crystalized a "return of our lands in the Ukraine" sentiment.<sup>1</sup>

B. B. Janz sensed the danger of National Socialism from the very onset. He always stood for a church separate from



any national identification. He also believed in nonresistance, and Nazism was militant! Mennonites who embraced Hitler's definition of *Deutschtum* denied their historic faith.

The real danger lay not with Seelheim's propaganda as such, but with the Mennonite promoters of Nazism whose articles in *Der Bote* were reaching many of the recent immigrants. On December 5, 1934, two articles, written in Germany, appeared in *Der Bote*.<sup>2</sup> Janz was incensed at the propagandistic intent of the authors. One of them suggested the Mennonites in Canada follow the example of their German brothers and reject nonresistance; the second observed that Menno Simons and Johann Cornies "have always and would still defend the honor of innocent people on German or Frisian soil."<sup>3</sup>

"It appears our teacher [Menno] has to join the *Selbstschutz* (militia for self defense) and join the military" Janz commented, "since the 'German nation as a people without living space' has been engaged in self-defense for decades."<sup>4</sup>

He agreed with one of the articles: the application of non-resistance left much to be desired. An inadequate performance, however, did not justify its rejection.

Are we not all becoming? Why then demand 100% [achievement] with regard to nonresistance? Why set it aside and say, "You are not and will never become." . . . So we are not where we should be. . . . Can we not work back towards our original source and teaching, instead of moving further away? The blessing of the fathers has unmistakably rested upon the children. . . . Do we want to transfer this blessing into a curse?<sup>5</sup>

The *Bote* proponents of a Mennonite identification with Hitler's Germany usually presented variations of stereotype argument. Historic Mennonite cultural ties with Germany implied a political affinity as well. Nonresistance was obsolete, and since the National Socialists were the obvious party for Germany, should not Mennonites everywhere, true to their German heritage, become its ardent supporters? References to the purity and superiority of the German race, which in the new history included the Mennonites, also belonged to this thinking. Janz's *Bote* article of 1934 clearly indicated the nature of his opposition to this type of reasoning. Basic to the issue was the teaching of nonresistance, which limited the Christian's identification with the state. His concern with the

peace principle, whether in the press or from the pulpit, always reflected an Anabaptist perspective.

Janz knew his people. They believed what they read and heard—especially in *Der Bote*. Thanks to Seelheim's generosity Nazi books and pictures were arriving in many Mennonite homes. Shortwave radios occasionally received Hitler's speeches and some of the recent immigrants were attracted by his rabid anti-Bolshevism.

As the 1930's progressed the incursions of National Socialism seemed to increase. Janz heard of "Brown Shirt" organizations, rallies, demonstrations and clashes. Certain Mennonites had joined and others were vulnerable to the intensifying propaganda. All was not well, but did his brethren know that? "Do we here in Canada and America see the sword coming?" he asked *Bote* readers early in 1938.<sup>6</sup> In view of mounting world tensions wasn't it time to reassess priorities? There were some moves in the right direction. "The General Conference in Reedley, California, adopted a nice resolution on the peace position in spite of some rumblings of discontent. No, we have not lost our stance; our peace teaching remains—in our confessions of faith and catechism. But [does it also remain] in the hearts of the brethren? That is the weak spot."<sup>7</sup> Mennonites performed admirably in areas like mental health, education and conference organization. "Why not an equal dedication to the faith of the fathers? On the one hand this vibrant energy, the whole heart; on the other [namely nonresistance] great passivity, criminal negligence—is it half-hearted—or less?"<sup>8</sup>

Janz could not forget the Mennonite experience in revolutionary Russia, where nonresistance faltered during successive crises. Recovery was slow and painful. "During those difficult, bitter times in Russia we experienced the bloody reality of how harsh the testing can be. Is that not a warning for the west? We won't survive if we continue as we have. We must become more serious, much more serious."<sup>9</sup>

World tensions approached a breaking point. War loomed on the horizon and yet there was so little concern with non-resistance. Throughout the 1930's Janz spoke of the need for Mennonites to again internalize their historic peace teaching. How else could they cope with future violence? Janz sensed that Nazism with its dogma and its deification of party and state was potentially as intolerant as the doctrinaire Bolshevism

he knew in the 1920's. Its kind of totalitarianism, while at the opposite end of the political spectrum, promised only violence.

One of the most characteristic profiles of Janz's stance on National Socialism found expression in an article, apparently never published, entitled *From Whence to Where?*<sup>10</sup> The brunt of his attack was directed against the attempt to integrate Nazi race theory with a Mennonite future. "A pure German blood is commonly heralded among us," he wrote, "in whose lofty, God-sanctioned destiny we Mennonites can occupy such a good position" "<sup>11</sup> A moderate nationalism had become a fanaticism. Why should the fulfillment of a Mennonite destiny become dependent on a close identification with a German national movement so recent in origin and so pretentious in ambition? It was not a question of pure or noble blood "but of our undying soul."<sup>12</sup>

Janz resorted to a form of argument uniquely his own.

If we can fulfill our delegated task by remaining rooted in our German ancestry;<sup>13</sup> if the race theory objectively and academically proves "that individuals and nations can only fulfill their God-ordained task as long as their blood is pure and unadulterated;"<sup>14</sup> if the more one gives up being German, "the more one sacrifices good character"—acquires more negative qualities—"that is one becomes more immoral, faithless, dishonorable, biased, etc."<sup>15</sup> Wouldn't this be degeneration or degradation? <sup>16</sup>

The Russian Mennonites in Canada were not decadent or in a state of moral decline. They were still fulfilling their calling, without embracing German nationalism or its latest advocate, National Socialism.

In his article Janz was especially incensed by a recent Winnipeg incident. At a pro-Nazi rally held in the city the key speaker referred to a "German faith in God" (*deutsches Gottvertrauen*).<sup>17</sup> What utter nonsense! Individual faith had nothing to do with nationality. Was a German faith more valid than an English one? Did it influence the heart of God more decisively? Had race and language united the Mennonites with the other German colonists in Russia? No!<sup>18</sup> The Mennonites had changed from the Dutch to the German language in Prussia; in Canada another linguistic shift loomed on the horizon. How could one language become the indispensable vehicle for faith?

During the first half of 1927 Janz visited several Mennonite

conferences in the United States in the interests of his suffering brethren in Russia. He saw the acculturation of the American Mennonite firsthand. The experience only strengthened his long-held conviction, that faith transcended national barriers.

"They have completely changed their language," he wrote of the U.S. Mennonite conferences, "but have they changed their faith, character and morals? How I mobilized eyes, ears, heart and soul to study this cardinal question—conscientiously, objectively, independently of my church affiliation and of my own support for our German [language]." <sup>19</sup>

If a German cultural affinity was so important for a Mennonite identity, why was it that the English-speaking brethren in America performed so admirably in personal conduct, missions, their support of colleges, and in the alleviation of famine in Russia during the 1920's? <sup>20</sup> Who saved the Russian Mennonites fleeing to Batum in 1921-22? Who rescued the "sixty-two young Mennonite warriors who fled across the Black Sea to Constantinople with the rest of Wrangel's army?" <sup>21</sup> Who sent clothes and tractors? The answer was obvious—English-speaking Mennonites.

Janz observed that he subscribed to the English language papers of four leading Mennonite groups. Since these people were not German, should they not reflect, as Nazi race theory suggested, a moral laxity? By contrast German periodicals ought to project a moral intensity. "Are they [English-speaking Mennonites] weak or inconsequential? No! I trust their manly courage and steadfastness of character, especially with regard to nonresistance, more than the adherents of any other conference of Mennonites." <sup>22</sup> The Mennonite stance was not dependent on racial origins or a close national identification with the Third Reich. Ethnic origins guaranteed neither morality nor heroic resolve. The Mennonite stance, particularly nonresistance, must be upheld whether supported or prohibited by special laws. "Menno Simons and his contemporaries had no privileges. We, together with our forefathers, have the same right: to suffer." <sup>23</sup>

### *Language and Culture*

Why does he cling to the German language and defend the old traditions? People who learned to know Janz in the 1950's, especially those in the United States, asked that question.

They themselves lived in a monolingual society and could hardly appreciate the succession of cultures which had molded this man, now in his seventies. His Prussian ancestors, refugees from the Netherlands, reluctantly gave up Dutch. These German-speaking migrants then moved to Polish-Russia, finally to the Ukraine. As a child Janz learned German and Low-German, as a youth Russian and in later years some Ukrainian. He was almost fifty when he left Russia for Canada. Until then German was basic to his inner religious experience and to his ministry in the church.

If Janz appeared as a traditionalist to some in the 1950's he was not that in the 1930's. As a new immigrant he clearly understood the pressures for assimilation exerted upon the Russian Mennonites by the Canadian environment. The migrants had scattered throughout the West in small groups and single families. Isolated from each other they were surrounded by an English society which compared with the Russian environment, appeared more refined and sophisticated. It was easily capable of attracting and absorbing young Mennonites. The Canadian school system, exacting in its demands for conformity and assimilationistic in character, poised another threat. Most children of school age spoke English within a few months of their arrival in Canada. In their struggle to survive economically many families sent their daughters to work in the cities. Janz knew of 400 Mennonite working girls in Winnipeg and 200 in Saskatoon. Members of his own family worked in Lethbridge. How would these young people cope with the influence of other lifestyles?

The strong Mennonite identity prevailing in Russia was not transferable to Canada. In the old homeland vast economic resources enabled the Mennonites to erect institutions at every level of their life experience. In Canada, with exceptions like the Rosthern or Gretna High Schools, such institutions did not exist. Janz anticipated a rapid cultural assimilation. In this context he never forgot his 1927 experiences among the Old Mennonites of the eastern United States. Again and again he heard how the young left those congregations which clung to the German after it was no longer used in the home. "We must decide whether to lose language or children. If [we opt] for language we will lose many children and in the end the language as well."<sup>24</sup> In the early 1930's all the new settlers still spoke German, but already Janz saw change on the horizon.

How lovely this working together on the farm—father, mother, children. On Sundays old and young go to the house of God . . . and here, in spite of love and unity, comes the conflict. We have grown apart [actually] spoken apart. The minister breaks the bread of life and lays it before the people—and only half the people can, benefit—they [the others] will go, never to return—because the sermon tells them nothing in their contemporary language.<sup>25</sup>

The “old ways” sometimes became too old. At 55 years of age Janz naturally desired to keep the German, but only for cultural, not religious reasons. He believed in change but not for the sake of change. On the other hand it was better to change sooner rather than later. The issue was simple: being a Mennonite meant more than language and culture. Its forms altered, but not its essence.

Through the generations our forefathers were deeply concerned about striving for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as set forth in Matt. 6:33. . . . The Mennonite catechism states that they pursued this struggle with much self-denial and resignation; that they suffered many persecutions and later experienced oppression again and again; that they, following the Master’s principle ‘My kingdom is not of this world,’ steadfastly stood for the separation of church and state; that the Holy Scripture and only it be the final authority in all questions of life. . . . *This* is where we came from and of this heritage we are not ashamed. Innerly we want to recapture this stance . . . if need be to suffer and die for Him. . . .<sup>26</sup>

If the essence of Mennonitism was the issue, cultural change mattered little. “The faith of the fathers (I mean the personal faith of the heart, for that is what it was) has inwardly produced what is good in the Mennonites—never the language—whether Dutch or German.”<sup>27</sup> Not even a decade had passed since the Russian Mennonites arrived in Canada and already Janz was speaking of language transition. His formula for those caught amid the assimilationistic pressures of Canadian society was straightforward: work to preserve the old and use it for your benefit, but don’t resist the new. A knowledge of three languages was preferable to knowing only one. German and Low-German brought much that was good to the

Mennonite experience. Such cultural assets must not be discarded lightly. "If we look at Mennonite settlement and pioneer life in the past, those settlements which wanted a good education for their children in the two languages of the mother tongue, as well as in the national language, always did better in the long run."<sup>28</sup> Transmit what you can to your children. Speak German, sing German songs, have them go to German school on Saturdays. If German is your first heritage continue to cultivate it. "... I turn to my mother, my home, the German school, the German sermon, my German Bible, the German chorale, the worthwhile German devotional literature, German pedagogy and knowledge. . . ."<sup>29</sup> At least one other element was related to cultural preservation: the private school.

History had fused Mennonite faith and German culture. In Canada an English-speaking world necessarily dissolved these old bonds and created new ones. The language which young Mennonites eventually spoke was not crucial for Janz, but their historical and contemporary sense of identity was of utmost importance. Concern with this problem emerged almost as soon as Janz settled permanently in the Coaldale Mennonite community. In January, 1930, he reported the formation of a Bible School Society to the local congregation. "It has become clear to all brethren [of the Society] that a Bible school in Coaldale is essential and is indispensable to the work of the Kingdom of God."<sup>30</sup>

Janz's congregation, a community heavily in debt, was reluctant to accept full financial responsibility for the school. For him personally there was no question about its necessity and importance. Some years later the matter was resolved. "Where would our Coaldale youth be today if we had had no such institution until now?"<sup>31</sup> he asked his congregation in 1937. A decade later Janz was vindicated. By then a number of prominent leaders, teachers and ministers at the Canadian Conference level traced their roots back to Coaldale.

Two developments intensified Janz's promotion of schools in the 1940's. World War II catapulted many young Mennonites into either forestry or military service. As a staunch advocate of nonresistance and chairman of the Military Problems Committee of Western Canada, he had intensive interaction with Mennonite young men appearing before local courts. Perhaps he became alarmed at how little they knew of the story of their fathers. They were children of

impoverished immigrants, more concerned with economic survival than book learning. The community must do better for the post-war generation.

Janz had a second concern: more and more Mennonite young people were leaving the closed agricultural community of their childhood and seeking their fortunes elsewhere. He was not too deeply concerned about the Mennonite girls working as domestics in the various urban centers in western Canada. Many of them spent one or two years in Bible school, an experience which strengthened their sense of community. While in the city, the majority found shelter and religious nurture in the special homes (*Maedchenheime*) established for them. But what of those Mennonites who sought professional training? In the Russian setting nursing and teaching were regarded as most acceptable careers, but the training schools themselves were largely Mennonite. In Canada such knowledge was acquired in provincial institutions. In 1937 the dean of the University of Alberta visited Coaldale and spoke with Janz: he wanted Mennonite young people to attend the university in Edmonton.<sup>32</sup>

Where would the new professionalism lead? Would insecure or uninformed Mennonites leave the faith? By 1945 Janz knew that too little had been done. Almost 50 per cent of the young men eligible for military service joined the active forces. They had not heard of Menno Simons! How many more would the peacetime mobilization for higher education claim? Bible school was not enough. Even worse, many young people moved directly into professional training. What could the community offer them by way of preparation?

It was this concern which motivated Janz, at 68, to work for the establishment of a private high school in Coaldale. At the first meeting of the Mennonite School Society of Alberta on March 8, 1946, Janz reported a favorable interview with the Alberta Minister of Education. It was time to act. "Right at present is the most opportune time to found a private school with full government approval."<sup>33</sup> Other members of the Society were similarly inclined. Land was purchased, and before long a modest building was moved onto the site. Janz soon became chairman of the local steering committee, a post which he held until 1956.

Why did Janz, in his early seventies, consent to chair an educational society sponsoring a highschool? Was it impossible to leave the center stage on which he had stood so long? Was



there still a desire to control community affairs? Such suspicions were unfounded. After a lifetime of public work the tedium of another committee was hardly attractive. Janz was simply the obvious person to provide leadership and negotiate with the Alberta government. Then, too, he held strong views concerning the place of schools in the Mennonite experience and became a most influential exponent of them in the Alberta constituency.

Janz's endorsement of the private school idea seems to have had a twofold basis. In his annual reports to the Society he stressed Christian upbringing (*christliche Erziehung*) and the preparation of Christian workers as the essential objectives of the school. "We wish that the goal laid down at the founding of the school actually be reached: to train men and women for Christ and provide them with a rich life's knowledge with which to effectively serve the church and community."<sup>34</sup> Christian education enabled each generation to "become witnesses of Christ as missionaries, teachers, nurses, farmers and as ordinary workers in the church."<sup>35</sup> Basic to this process was *Erziehung* (training, upbringing). Christian students had to become something. They were to be true and faithful servants, working hard, seeking divine not human approval.<sup>36</sup>

In his second last report as chairman of the school committee Janz observed, "The school has never functioned as well as at present; on the one hand there is progress in knowledge, in actual learning, then [also] as a family progress in good Christian propriety and discipline."<sup>37</sup> At the age of seventy-eight he was still forward-looking. Unlike some of the other local brethren, Janz never viewed the private school as a means of self-preservation. The future needed men and women of stalwart Christian character, and with "gifted teachers, good shepherds, skillful educators"<sup>38</sup> this goal could be reached.

By 1950 many Russian Mennonite congregations were switching to English. In the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg the German theology lectures of A. H. Unruh were being supplemented by the English language ones of younger instructors. Was the transition too rapid? "Not that I consider the German language in and of itself holier or capable of generating greater piety,"<sup>39</sup> but was the switch to English producing a stronger church or were the young people identifying less than before? Why did the college not produce

bilingual pastors? Janz was grieved to find that there was in Canada, "a young church which is going its own way and does not understand its fathers nor co-operate with them."<sup>40</sup>

Two problems generated by the "young church" were especially distressing for Janz. It was, he felt, extremely vulnerable to the influence of fundamentalist theology. "A Mennonite Brethren dissolution of the first order is in progress,"<sup>41</sup> Janz wrote, when he heard that 110 Mennonite Brethren students were attending Prairie Bible Institute at Three Hills, Alberta. In his opinion such institutions were strongly rooted in North American culture and offered Mennonite students no appreciation of their heritage. There was grave danger in theology which contained elements of dispensationalism, stressed experience at the expense of the practical life, and denied the peace principle. Mennonite pulpits already felt the fundamentalist impact in the 1930's and 1940's. Now another generation which knew little or nothing of Menno Simons was being subjected to a direct, intensive indoctrination. Were some of the younger instructors at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College tainted with an alien theology?

Janz had a second concern. The "young church" was too liberal in its social ethics. Janz's ethnic background in Russia as well as the strict training of his childhood clearly defined the nature of his personal lifestyle. Some of the religious and social norms he held dear were certainly shaped by custom and tradition, but on the whole Janz the new immigrant was not legalistic and rarely imposed his personal ethics on others.

In the 1950's that seemed to change. Compared with earlier decades, Janz appeared more rigid and contentious. Aging was certainly taking its toll, but there was another factor as well. The cultural changes which Janz predicted in the 1930's accelerated rapidly during the Second World War, and by 1950 were almost complete. The man who spoke only German was no longer heard. Janz was that man. Not only language but social practices changed. He found it difficult to leave the old and proven and accept the new and different. Raised in the framework of Victorian propriety, he could not accept the free association of sexes at Tabor College in Kansas or the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Manitoba.<sup>42</sup> The dramas performed at these colleges, he felt, often lacked a decidedly Christian emphasis. What of the new preaching styles—and music—what was happening to music? Must college instructors

now stress the *Volkslied* (folk song) after their music training in Germany? Must the North American gospel quartet tradition become a part of the Mennonite heritage?

I find the name "Kings Four" ostentatious—and at the first public performance of the college! The harmony was so extraordinary that one anxiously asked "Are they still on pitch?" . . . I was choir conductor for almost twenty years. Now I'm told, "You don't understand it, you're too stupid." Today I'm told this in music, but how long will it take before those of us who have no college [training] are told with regard to our understanding of Scripture, "You don't know that, only higher learning can tell you for sure."<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps these were petty words for one who always identified the basic, larger issues in the life of his people. What happened to the progressive leader of the 1930's and 1940's? Had he become a petulant old man? One answer seems to emerge clearly. After years of devoted service, his generation was no longer needed. That was difficult to accept. As we shall see, Janz was deeply involved with the issue of pacifism during the Second World War and the subsequent resettlement of displaced persons. For almost a decade there was excitement and high drama. By 1950 calm prevailed. Janz felt isolated.



**B. B. Janz at work on his memoirs.**

## *Chapter X*

### *Nonresistance And World War II*

National Socialism with its dogmas of race superiority and German destiny filled Janz with deep apprehension. Unlike some of his fellow Mennonites he had never considered German culture and language essential to Mennonite survival. In the press, as we have seen, he reverted to outright sarcasm in combating fellow Mennonites who supported Hitler. He never forgot the disastrous results which Mennonite fraternization with the German occupation forces in the Ukraine produced during the Russian Civil War. A dissenting minority, especially a religious one, must not wilfully incur the anger of its host society. If war came those Canadian Mennonites who were active Nazi sympathizers seriously threatened the wellbeing of their far more numerous neutral brethren. How could the Mennonites maintain a collective peace witness when some of them unabashedly supported Hitler's aggression?

The threat of war forced Janz to pursue a second problem, more practical perhaps but also more complex. What form would the Mennonite peace witness take in wartime? As early as the mid-thirties Janz had spoken of reaching an accord with the Canadian Government on the question of seeking some form of alternative service for conscientious objectors. The Mennonite Brethren in Western Canada responded to his prodding in 1935 and established a Committee on Nonresistance to deal with the peace question. Under Janz's direction it drafted a statement on peace and alternative service which was presented and accepted by the Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1937.<sup>1</sup> The resolutions presented carried a typically Janz flavor. An application of the peace principle must involve positive service.

. . . we as citizens are not only obligated to pay taxes to our country, but also provide a service insofar as it does

not run contrary to our conscience. . . . We should not hesitate to do all we can to serve the principle of life, whether or not it is connected with danger to life or with other difficulties. Cowardice or comfort or any other excuses cannot play a role here or in any way influence conscience. We cannot, for example oppose alternative service as disciples of Jesus. . . . In caring for the sick we serve the principle of life. If someone again sends them into war, that is into death, this does not rest upon our conscience, for this we do not have to answer.<sup>2</sup>

Janz's stance emerged from his Russian experience. In his estimation Mennonite participation in the forestry service had been a withdrawing, isolating experience. It had produced too many time servers and too few men of conviction. Then, too, governments must understand what peace advocates were trying to do. Already in 1936 he proposed an inter-Mennonite delegation to seek an interview with Prime Minister Mackenzie King.<sup>3</sup> Basic to the interview should be a request for an alternative service program. Nothing materialized.

Meanwhile the threat of war intensified. Janz, already alarmed by the pro-Nazi sentiments expressed in *Der Bote*, was shocked to hear of a pro-Nazi rally held in Winnipeg during late January, 1939. "If it comes to war," he wrote, "popular agitation will mount into popular fury, which could bring dire consequences for us."<sup>4</sup> His gravest fears materialized on September 10, 1939, when Canada declared war on Germany. Fortunately for the Mennonite cause, universal military conscription was not immediately decreed.

For Janz personally, the outbreak of the war brought the pressures of super-patriotism from the pro-British elements in the Lethbridge region. He was officially queried as to the Mennonite stance. "I have declared it clear and definitively: no taking of weapons and no fighting; do Red Cross work, serve the wounded; provide services in the line of life; reject all services in the line of destruction."<sup>5</sup> In Russia the Mennonites allowed some flexibility in the application of the peace principle. Such toleration must continue. "We will have to seek government approval for both convictions—for those who reject all [service] and also for those who want to do alternative service."<sup>6</sup>

In Western Canada serious concern with the peace question began in 1939. A special inter-Mennonite Conference convened

in Winkler, Manitoba, on May 15. Janz attended the consultation. The discussion following the presentation of papers focused mainly on one issue: the question of alternative service (*Ersatzdienst*). Differences of opinion reflected differences in the historical evolution of the various denominations. The Russian Mennonite immigrants of the 1920's favored not only alternative service but even participation in noncombatant medical corps within the army. In their past experience this constituted a more positive peace witness than total withdrawal and noninvolvement. The descendants of the Mennonite immigrants of the 1870's rejected any type of substitute service and felt no need to investigate the question any further. Peace after all still prevailed and the Order-in-Council of 1873 specifically exempted them from the military draft. In view of its divisive nature the issue was finally tabled.<sup>7</sup> Janz was deeply disturbed by this lack of resolve.

Meanwhile the conservative faction in Manitoba organized a Committee of Elders to deal with the peace question. In the other western provinces prevailing sentiment favored an alternative service program. Janz emerged as one of the leading spokesmen of this position. On his own initiative he traveled to Edmonton, the Alberta capital, to seek an interview with the Mobilization Board. His proposal for an alternative service program met with a very positive response. Encouraged by this success he began to advocate a broad-based, inter-provincial approach to the problem. Strong support from his friend, Elder David Toews of the General Conference Mennonites, finally resulted in an inter-Mennonite meeting in Winnipeg in October, 1940.<sup>8</sup> The differences between the two major groups were not reconciled and in the end each made its contact with Ottawa separately. Later developments showed Janz's stance on alternative service as one of the more radical among the Canadian Mennonites.

Janz was extremely impatient with the lack of Mennonite action. It was important, he felt, to have some input into the national formulation of the alternative service program. The situation demanded immediate response. "I think that you should go to Ottawa immediately," he wrote to David Toews in mid-July, 1940. "It seems to me that you should stay there for quite sometime and with a fixed address in order to direct Mennonite affairs."<sup>9</sup> His anxiety intensified when in September the chairman of the Alberta War Services Board, Mr. H. Harvey, advised Janz to draw up a list of young men eligible

for exemption.<sup>10</sup> When the list was presented on September 30, a long discussion ensued on the nature of a non-combatant medical service for the Mennonites. Harvey promised Janz that the young men would never be forced into active duty, but such a reassurance on the provincial level still left Janz uneasy.<sup>11</sup> The terms of alternative service must be finalized in Ottawa. A delegation should be dispatched as soon as possible and the Deputy Minister of National War Services, T. C. Davies, informed of its pending arrival.

The delegation finally materialized in November, 1940. Janz as the chairman of the Military Problems Committee of Western Canada made contact with the sister committee of the Conference of Historic Peace Churches of Ontario.<sup>12</sup> A delegation consisting of eight members traveled to Ottawa and on November 12, 1940, met with Major-General L. R. La Flèche and Mr. T.C. Davies, the Associate Deputy Minister of National War Services. A memorandum summarizing the Mennonite viewpoint was left with the ministers. Submitted by the western delegates under Janz's leadership it represented the "leftist" view within the delegation.<sup>13</sup> Alternative training "might be in forestry, first aid, ambulance and hospital work and farm or any national service of a non-military character. . . ." <sup>14</sup> It requested that all training be supervised by civilian authorities in camps separate from those of the military. A second memorandum was drafted by the delegation of eight following the interview. It was more conservative in character requesting alternative service of "an agricultural or forestry nature" which took place on "government-owned land" and as part of the training might include "first aid courses." <sup>15</sup>

The Ottawa delegation agreed to the religious examination of CO (conscientious objector) candidates by local boards. Janz felt the procedure subjected the individual candidate to excessive coercion. How could naive young men stand up against experienced inquisitors? If they were persuaded to compromise their conscience a common Mennonite peace stance would be impossible. The restrictive definition of alternative service bothered him even more. These views not only prevented an active healing role in wartime, but "in times of widespread national tension it offers no protection as a really valuable service which would count in the eyes of the general population." <sup>16</sup>



Unilaterally Janz decided to request broader terms for the alternative service program. These were to reflect the views of the Brethren and General Conference Mennonites in Western Canada. A draft memorandum was presented to Major General La Flèche on November 14.<sup>17</sup> Following an interview with him Janz drafted a final version of the document on November 19. It did not mention forestry or agricultural service but called for "first aid, ambulance and hospital work."<sup>18</sup> Training or service should take place under civilian authorities, "but there would be no objection against a uniform in the camp itself, or physical training for discipline and order."<sup>19</sup> It was of course assumed that an ambulance or hospital worker could never be "transferred to the active service."<sup>20</sup> For Janz personally one issue was extremely important: that the young men be exempted from military training by certified lists, without personally appearing before the Divisional War Services Board.

Some of the other committee members were not happy with Janz's plan for a noncombatant medical service and, in a letter to J.G. Gardiner, Minister of National War Services, tactfully suggested that the request for ambulance and hospital work reflected a regional and minority viewpoint.<sup>21</sup> Though Janz's name appeared on the document, his December 1st letter to Associate Minister Davis suggests only half-hearted support.<sup>22</sup> Why was the willingness of many Mennonite Churches to care for "wounded and sick soldiers even on the battlefield, even in the army,"<sup>23</sup> not given more recognition by authorities? And why the public hearings of individual CO's in the courts? In his own province it only stirred up public sentiment. Already two Mennonite Churches had been burned during the same night. Janz signed himself "your discouraged obedient servant."<sup>24</sup>

His concern with the local examination of CO's intensified during December. The procedure he felt would begin before Ottawa had fully clarified its position. Hearings had, in fact, begun in Manitoba. Such secret, individual interviews forced inarticulate young men to the wall: at this stage even the more eloquent did not know their rights.<sup>25</sup> Why did the government not simply ratify lists of young Mennonites in good standing compiled by reliable church leaders? There were many young men willing "to face danger, suffering and even death."<sup>26</sup> These would wear a uniform, serve under military

ambulance authorities, and move with the military to the battlefield if necessary. Could not the government assign these "to their duties of mercy and love and honor"<sup>27</sup> without subjecting them to personal interrogation?

Janz's tenacious concern with exemption by lists probably reflected his experience with another government in another time. As chairman of the VBHH in Russia he had witnessed the examination of conscientious objectors by local courts. These hearings usually proved capricious in procedure and disastrous for the defendant. Was a democracy at war much different—especially one so committed to the British cause and, by wartime expediency, decidedly anti-German?

The Mennonite leader's bold approach to government leaders also stemmed from his Russian experience. There he pursued a direct and personal diplomacy. A well-placed official, properly approached, frequently approved a benevolent policy. Concessions were much more tied to officialdom than to legal procedure. To avoid bureaucracy you approached the highest bureaucrat. When Janz quite independently of the inter-Mennonite delegation, addressed letters to Davis, La Flèche and Gardiner on the questions of the lists and non-combatant medical service he reflected his own longstanding and experience-sanctioned diplomacy.

We should not suppose that his radical view of alternative service was a political expedient designed to procure processing by lists and prevent the harassing of CO's in the courts. He himself had served in the Russian forestry service as a pacifist and had concluded that it represented an impoverished expression of the peace principle. On the other hand, during World War I Mennonite young men gained an excellent reputation as medical workers at the Russian front. For him nonresistance reflected only one basic principle: "Our duty is to preserve life, not to destroy life nor to participate in any work for destruction of life."<sup>28</sup> It followed that "we are free for the work of mercy, and consider it our duty to help the wounded and sick soldiers, no matter under what circumstances."<sup>29</sup> It was not crucial whether the CO came under military or civilian command, as long as he was never forced to take the rifle and kill.

Meanwhile on December 24, 1940, the Canadian Government passed an Order-in-Council amending the regulations respecting conscientious objectors generally. Mennonites and Doukhobors received specific mention.<sup>30</sup> The new regulations

accommodated most of Janz's sensitivities. They allowed for noncombatant service under both a military or civilian command. Initially groups like the Mennonites and Doukhobors were to be exempted by virtue of their membership in their organization, while other conscientious objectors were required to prove their position to Mobilization Boards.<sup>31</sup> In relatively short order most Boards were examining all CO's. Those who obtained deferments were subject to alternative service.

In May, 1941, the Canadian Government finally announced the establishment of CO camps in the national parks, under the auspices of the Department of National War Services. Janz, while pleased that concrete action had finally been taken, still felt park work too restrictive. Writing to James Gardiner, Janz referred to his earlier request for some type of ambulance service.

... we are surprised to have our young men moved to park work. . . . If the Government does not need ambulance workers, very well. Our young men will do the park work conscientiously. But on the other hand we believe in this crucial time the Government needs ambulance workers a hundred times more than park workers. . . . May I here express the desire of our churches in Alberta to be of greater service to the country. . . . I think it's time to organize some units of Mennonite ambulance workers. . . . You shall have honest, thrifty and industrious men in the ambulance service.<sup>32</sup>

Were the Alberta Mennonites speaking through Janz or was Janz expressing his own, deeply felt convictions? Most probably he had convinced his brethren of the validity of his own radical pacifism. Meanwhile in Lethbridge, Alberta, the examination of CO's by the local War Services Board took an unexpected turn. The Board collectively assigned all the young men appearing before it to a two-month period of active military training. Then they could perform noncombatant services within the military. The hearings were unduly harsh. Little attention was paid to the religious examination of the candidate; most concern focused on the type of duty assigned the CO with the threat of imprisonment for noncompliance.<sup>33</sup>

Janz wrote directly to J. Thorson, Minister of National War Services, clearly delineating the limits of his pacifism. "... Ambulance service is the only service we can do conscientiously. It is entirely different to do noncombatant

service [with active military training]. The idea there is to work for destruction. We always have been opposed to doing that. . . . Many a young man will rather go to jail than march with a rifle in preliminary military training."<sup>34</sup> Mr. Thorson must know that the Mennonites had "told the Government frankly and openly how far they would go."<sup>35</sup> The offer of ambulance service was a matter of "conscience and frankness," the Mennonites were willing to prove their "words with deeds." They could not "go any farther in other directions."<sup>36</sup> Thorson's reply via Deputy Minister T. C. Davis completely missed the point. Two further letters addressed to Thorson and La Flèche reiterated that a noncombatant service calling for active military drill within the army was unacceptable. The hearings were nothing more than a technical processing and "not a test of the religious convictions of the applicant."<sup>37</sup>

The question of CO military training within the army was finally resolved early in 1942 by a special Mennonite delegation in Ottawa.<sup>38</sup> Thorson informed the delegation that clear instructions had been issued to the Divisional Boards by his department to the effect that conscientious objectors could not be inducted into "any form of noncombatant military service."<sup>39</sup> Under existing regulations alternative service was now only possible in the camps operated by the Department of Mines and Resources. Clemency was assured those "suffering penalties because of their conscientious objection to military service."<sup>40</sup>

In mid-January, 1942, La Flèche informed Janz directly of his department's position: no men would be accepted for non-combatant military training; all CO's must go to alternative service work camps.<sup>41</sup> Regulations regarding the camps were issued on September 26, 1942 and remained in effect until the end of the war. By the spring of 1943, labor pressures in industry and agriculture forced an alteration in the programs. Pacifists could now be employed in work of national importance, especially agriculture and industry.<sup>42</sup>

Janz remained disappointed in one respect. There was no provision for a Mennonite ambulance corps. Once more he pressed his view on the government, this time in a letter addressed to Prime Minister Mackenzie King.<sup>43</sup> Nothing changed. The die for alternative service in Canada was cast.

During the remaining war years Janz, as chairman of the Alberta Mennonite Committee for Services, became involved in the pastoral administration and supervision of various

aspects of the CO camps. He now came into direct contact with the young men themselves. Counselor, chaplain, arbitrator, advocate, disciplinarian: he played all these roles. Letters imploring aid or seeking advice arrived from all over Alberta. "I am writing to you about my being in the army instead of Jasper Park," a young man notified him.<sup>44</sup> Baffled by his draft call, another nineteen-year-old turned to Janz. Thinking in German and writing in English he plead, "I would like you to work it out for me so that I would not have to take arms but be sent to the camps for alternative service."<sup>45</sup>

Peculiar circumstances at times catapulted young men into the armed forces against their will. These too turned to Janz. One draftee concluded his story, "So here I am, a so-called CO in the Air Force."<sup>46</sup> Another commented, "I just received your worthy letter. I am happy for the opportunity to tell you all."<sup>47</sup> The story of a Mennonite CO in the Army Medical Corps ensued, a Mennonite who stalwartly refused to take a rifle into his hands in spite of military officers, courts and threats. A number of such cases came to Janz's attention.<sup>48</sup> Some CO's were inducted into active service through administrative errors. Others found themselves in awkward legal positions because they had failed to follow normal procedures. These lads, scattered across Canada, became an integral part of Janz's parish.

He served them well. As an experienced diplomat he feared neither rank nor hostility. Letters flowed to all levels of government. Anyone connected with the alternative service program or influential in some aspect of the military related to the program sooner or later heard from B. B. Janz. Some of them, like the G.P.U. official in Russia during the 1920's, would have crossed themselves at least three times if it meant getting rid of persistent Janz. The requests usually began, "Sorry to trouble you again, but. . . ." As a lawyer of this sort Janz won most of his cases. At the same time he was careful to remain painfully correct within the structure of existing law.

Janz's real ministry to the CO's was a pastoral one. The majority of the letters sent to them reflect a deep concern for their spiritual welfare. In them Janz emerges broadminded, tolerant, loving and admonishing. Both the General Conference and Mennonite Brethren Churches in Alberta and Saskatchewan excommunicated any member joining the active forces. Janz wrote to all without distinction.

His letters were friendly and personal. News of parents and next of kin as well as community happenings were usually reported. "We think of you and innerly participate in your experiences. How well we recall your visit and now you are so far away."<sup>49</sup> In an open, easy fashion he moved on to discuss the things of the soul. "The greatest inner joy for me is that you are never very far from the Lord; that you again and again struggle to stay with Jesus. . . . We are concerned that the constant upheaval in your life does not detract you from the Word and prayer. . . ."<sup>50</sup>

The widespread scattering of Mennonite young men filled Janz with some apprehension—was their Christian stance reinforced by fellowship with others? Did they have a place to worship? He read all the letters from the young men carefully. If some didn't write he wrote them. "We've heard nothing about your inner stance for a long time. This concerns us. You have become our brother, are you still that inside?"<sup>51</sup> No letter of this period condemned a man for joining the active forces. Janz remained loving and accepting of all Mennonite militarists. "How happy I was for your letter of October 11. I read it and studied it again and again. . . . You have stayed by the Lord and He by you . . . if only all could return this way. . . ."<sup>52</sup> Then came the latest news of MCC work; Janz's retirement from farming; the mass migration from the Prairies to British Columbia; the opening of a new Mennonite Brethren College in Winnipeg.

If a draftee realized he had made a mistake in joining the regular army . . . "Mr Janz, could you tell me what the best thing would be to do after my basic training?"<sup>53</sup> . . . the elderly churchman did what he could. He was not that tolerant with those who exhibited half-hearted convictions. "I am in a most awkward position to represent you as a pacifist. . . . Your commanding officer has told me . . . that you yourself have not objected to service (active) . . . now it appears that you are willing to be a soldier. . . ."<sup>54</sup> "One should have taken courage and said no," he wrote to another.<sup>55</sup>

Janz had little sympathy for the consequences suffered by a young Mennonite who refused to answer his draft call. "He has been sentenced to a year at hard labor," Janz informed another young friend in the army medical corps. "It is a disgrace that a Mennonite is so negligent of his duty. I will not intervene on his behalf."<sup>56</sup>

Upon learning that several CO's at one of the camps were taking to drink, he minced no words. "What you are doing brings a black mark on the camp and even on all camps. . . . Even if you are not converted, be a decent human being. Don't force me to take extreme action . . . this will be the last time you go to get beer. . . ." <sup>57</sup> Stupidity did not impress him either. "What can I do to help you if you don't help yourself?" <sup>58</sup> Some letters contained surprises. "How did you get to that neck of the woods?" he inquired of a young Mennonite writing from Onaway, Alberta. <sup>59</sup> But he was pleased with the young man for he held to the conscience of his forefathers and refused to shed human blood. To think that he held his stance "even though one has become lost far, far in the most distant corner." <sup>60</sup>

There were of course always the good men that deserved encouragement. "A few days ago I visited your parents," he wrote to one. " . . . The love and trust with which the parents spoke of their son made a deep impression on me and the thought came to me—'you must write them a letter, perhaps it will be an encouragement.' . . . Pete, I have seen how your mother's heart clings to you. Don't let her down." <sup>61</sup> "My dear Bernhard" he wrote to a young man in Campbell River, B.C. "Your dear father visited me today seeking counsel. . . . Your younger brother joined the RCAF on November 3. . . . Your sister Tina is again in the sanatorium." Bernhard's mother was sick. Father could impossibly look after the farm. "I am asking if the son would care to come home. . . ." <sup>62</sup> Bernhard was to write to the Department of National War Services in Edmonton requesting permission to return to the farm. He did.

Janz possessed a deep sense of collective responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the CO's in the camps. Persistent enquiries filled virtually every letter. Were they holding regular services? Did everyone attend? How are the long winter evenings spent—in singing, music and reading? He was especially concerned about good reading material and collected sizeable libraries for dispatch to the various camps. He suggested not only pious literature but something containing informative articles. Why not the Reader's Digest? As CO's the men were after all in the "service of peace, love, faithfulness and relief. . . . Maintain this as your life stance . . . may your character and inner life grow and increase. . . . Be an example to those who follow you. . . . Don't let your buddy

down, help him. Mennonite young men whose conscience rejects weapons will also have a conscience to do an honest job outside in forest work.”<sup>63</sup>

Often he became more personal. When a young man wrote to him of his doubts he replied, “It happened to me too, right after my conversion. . . . It was terrible.”<sup>64</sup> What was the trouble—doubts concerning God’s work, His existence, the efficacy of prayer, the walk of other Christians?

Whatever the case, Janz’s sense of participation was personal and heartfelt. During the course of World War II young men from Alberta, whether in active service, the medical core or in the national parks, all shared Janz’s love and concern equally. When a local Mennonite who had joined the RCAF was killed on a training mission Janz allowed a military funeral in Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church. An RCAF honorary guard marched with the funeral procession and stood at attention at the graveside, but without any rifles. Under no circumstances the rifle!

The local community found it difficult to contain Janz or limit his commitment to the larger Mennonite constituency. He in turn felt hemmed in by the expectations of his congregation. Life in the context of the local church was highly personal; there were always petty issues and differences to deal with. The difficult few often prevented a satisfying ministry to the responsive many. His vision and his comprehension of Christian processes went far beyond the confines of the Coaldale Church. These broader concerns at times made Janz impatient with the routine matters of parish life and possibly reduced his effectiveness.

Basically his pastoral role in Western Canada, as his interaction with the CO’s so amply demonstrated, was not essentially different from the problems which faced him locally. There was a deep concern with personal spiritual vitality, with believing, forgiving, consistent Christian living. Neither the status of those involved nor the gravity of the situation deterred him. Janz, the shepherd of this larger flock, was fearless when basic principles had been violated, but when despair and fear threatened, he showed only love and acceptance. He was at his best on a large stage. His *Verband* experience in Russia, his work with the CO’s, his committee involvement in North America—all these activities confirmed that fact. Now when he was 70, Paraguayan Mennonites would benefit from his presence.



## *Chapter XI*

### *Seeking The Brethren*

The mass dislocation which gripped Europe after the collapse of Germany in 1945 also affected many Mennonites. A large number of Russian Mennonites who found themselves under German occupation in the Ukraine retreated with the German Army in the so-called Great Trek. Many were recaptured in mid-1945, when the Allies allowed Soviet agents to scour all Germany in search of several million Russian nationals who had ended up in Germany as prisoners or workers. Many Mennonites and Russian Germans succeeded in eluding capture by hiding among the German refugees from other lands.

MCC focused primarily upon these people after 1945. With the wholehearted support of its North American constituency it concentrated on relief and resettlement. Initially the agency supervised large refugee camps in Germany, then arranged for settlement in that country or migration to Canada, Uruguay and especially Paraguay. Janz supported all these activities wholeheartedly. It was the same kind of "reaching out to the brethren" which he had experienced in the 1920's. Reporting on the post-war MCC activities to the Western Relief Committee (inter-Mennonite) in 1950 he observed that "the great relief work of the post-war years was an expression of our active nonresistance. God gave us grace to practice mercy. This work of compassion generates the spirit of love and peace in us. The active people in our conferences think of the need, pray for the distressed, pray for the workers and give. Our churches are slowly trained to give. What a blessing the 'little people' bring together."<sup>1</sup>

Janz, as a member of the Canadian Board of Colonization, worked closely with MCC. For him its mandate was so obvious: the maintenance of refugee camps, childrens homes, community centers; the placing of young men and women in

positions of voluntary service; the movement and settlement of Mennonite refugees. Janz, to his own amazement, soon became an active participant in these activities.

The Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference, disturbed by the hostilities and division among its sister churches in Brazil and Paraguay, decided to send Janz to South America on a ministry of reconciliation. The assignment, which "came like a bolt of lightening out of the clear sky,"<sup>2</sup> caused Janz considerable personal agony. "I subsequently resisted and cited my advanced years (69), failing strength, [physical] weaknesses and further my many obligations. . . ."<sup>3</sup> In the end he decided to go. "If only this year had come sooner!" he commented. "Now it must be God's grace and power from beginning to end. Hopefully nothing happens to my wife. She amazed me with her courageous insight that I should go. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Janz left on his assignment in early February, 1947. Weeks passed before he reached the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay. Since the country was in the grip of revolution he got no further than Asuncion. It was a frustrating vigil. "To date I have received virtually no correspondence, as yet no letter from home. I'm being kept in a sack—or like Noah in the ark with only one window overhead. Even world events don't concern me here since I do not master the Spanish language."<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile on February 22 the *Volendam* arrived in Buenos Aires with its 2,300 Mennonite refugees. Because he was born in Russia Janz was barred from entering Argentina. His first contact with the new arrivals came at the end of March when he was allowed to visit a refugee camp of some 370 near Asuncion. "On the whole I have really felt comfortable with my suffering brethren," he wrote. "It may sound a bit unchristian when I say I'm somewhat proud of such a calm, strong people."<sup>6</sup>

Janz had illusions about the difficulties of settling such a large number of refugees among the still economically impoverished Mennonite colonies in Paraguay. Was there sufficient housing? How could land be purchased without money? What earning possibilities existed? One problem transcended all others. Would the established settlements be strong enough to absorb the newcomers spiritually? The new emigrants spent the last thirty years under the star of Moscow, not the star of Bethlehem.

Janz's basic ministry, however, focused upon the old, not

the new settlers in Paraguay. Many of the older communities experienced a deep spiritual scarring in the late 1930's when some leaders became strong advocates of National Socialism. Their support for the Nazi cause tore a deep rift in a community which historically advocated the separation of church and state. Ironically the community itself, because it was self-enclosed, had integrated church and society. Locally a union of church and state prevailed while internationally National Socialism raised the question if a free church could ever identify with and submit to a tyrannical political order. No solution was found.

Bitter hostilities erupted. Rival leaders each sought to gain a following. The ending was tragic: private jealousies; tensions between educators and ministers; Mennonites from both Germany and the U.S. drawn into the politics of war; the misfiring of well-intended administrative decisions—all this culminated in a mass demonstration in the Paraguayan Mennonite capital of Philadelphia on March 10-11, 1944. Several minor incidents of violence prompted a U.S. citizen in the colonies to call in the Paraguayan militia. Together with another U.S. colleague he successfully pressured for the exile of two settlement leaders Fritz Kliwer and Hans Legiehn. The regrettable episode left much bitterness in its wake. Intense antagonism and distrust prevailed, coupled with a strong resentment against the foreign interference in local affairs.<sup>7</sup> Janz's ministry of reconciliation faced incredible odds.

A diary which Janz kept of his ministry in Paraguay has apparently been lost. Those with whom he worked remembered his directness and persistence. Alienation could only be overcome face to face. Long hours of dialogue, an open airing of the issues, a sincere, deeply-felt repentance, all these were essential ingredients of the healing process. Janz preached almost daily. He did not find it easy. "In one instance I could not work out a perspectus even though I sat the whole day over 1 Kings 18:17ff."<sup>8</sup> His sermons were simple and direct. "Our missionary brethren tell me that until now no one has been able to speak so directly as I. And always and everywhere the assemblies accepted it. I began to build up hope. For weeks only the Word of God. No meetings."<sup>9</sup>

For Janz personally, months of concentrated effort culminated in mid-August, 1947, when a series of meetings aimed at resolving past differences were held in the Fernheim Colony. The first meeting involved the leaders of the three local

churches and their assistants. The participants resolved to conciliate the past differences in the community, personal and collective. Each local congregation would declare its desire to repent of the past and seek trust and unity in the future.

After several more preliminary consultations, public meetings were scheduled for each Sunday during September, 1947. The first was held on September 7 in the Philadelphia town hall. Janz reflected upon Jonah's message to Nineveh.<sup>10</sup> In Philadelphia as in that ancient city a national repentance was in order. The issue was simple. "Wearing purple we did evil, wearing sackcloth we repent."<sup>11</sup> A period of public confession followed the sermon. In keeping with the deep earnest which characterized the proceedings two brethren were requested to keep minutes. Their record listed sixty-nine confessions. Again and again there were comments on the divisive nature of the National Socialist movement within the colonies. People spoke of past hatreds, of desires for vengeance, of arming themselves to commit violence. In a letter to the Coaldale Church Janz described what happened.

Then came confessions and repentance. We experienced such extraordinary things, one after the other. It was unexpected that so many showed contrition, in all some sixty-nine. How their spiritual life had suffered from the socio-political pressures . . . how this one had hated, how that one had almost despaired . . . how families suffered. Many expected little from this day and now things so wondrously changed. Others had no intention of showing contrition but were innerly compelled to confess to harsh speeches, evil words. . . .<sup>12</sup>

The second public meeting was held in the Lichtfeld church in Philadelphia on September 14. Basing his sermon on John 6:54-71, Janz compared the crisis in the life of Jesus and his disciples to the crisis facing the Paraguayan Mennonite Brethren Church. Again opportunity was given for public confession and testimony. Old and young participated. Many again reflected upon the bitterness and alienation generated by the Nazism of the early forties. After seventy-five people had spoken the meeting came to a close. Janz requested the assembled congregation to affirm reconciliation and the pledge the restoration of unity. No one remained seated. A communion service followed. Janz reported:

After a brief pause opportunity was given for confession.

. . . Each time the congregation of more than 300 happily stood up [as a gesture of forgiveness]. People were anxious to rid themselves of all guilt. . . . Every confession, long or short, was never formal and always from the heart. Some spoke from a deep agony of soul. Others expressed their joy concerning this day. . . . In all my fifty years of participation there was rarely a communion service . . . innerly more worthy and pure than this one.<sup>13</sup>

On the third Sunday Janz addressed the "United Mennonite Brethren Church of Fernheim."<sup>14</sup> Reconciliation brought unification. Speaking from Hebrews 10 he referred to Jesus as the high priest who interceded on behalf of the church in Fernheim. Fernheim had elected to follow a new way. As in the case of the apostolic church four things were essential: fellowship; the apostolic teaching; the breaking of bread and prayer. Special deliberations followed the service. Janz summarized the events of the past months. He focused on the meetings of the previous two Sundays in a very personal, direct fashion. In his estimation the issue which had divided the community was the question of nonresistance. When the principle was compromised in Russia by the *Selbstschutz*, the results were disastrous. In Paraguay a less militant compromise caused much spiritual devastation.

Even here in Fernheim there was a deviation from the biblical guideline. I have had to conclude that by and large the confessions were much more concerned with the results of evil than with the evil itself. If the evil had not been there beforehand, its results, the divisions, could have been prevented. I missed this insight in the confessions. What if things had continued as they were? In my estimation too much weight has been placed on the divisions and not enough on the basic evil itself. . . . Those who have personally judged themselves have done well. They will never regret it, least of all in their dying hour.<sup>15</sup>

Janz wanted a firm policy on the issue of National Socialism. He had witnessed the mass upheaval which Nazi propaganda generated among the German-speaking Mennonites in Canada during the later 1930's. In Paraguay he observed even worse effects. There could be no compromise on the issue. This evil allowed no "live and let live" policy. What

should be done with the diehard National Socialists still in the church? In the hey-day of Nazi influence the political activists were not censured within the church community. As a strong advocate of the separation of church and state Janz felt the situation could not go unchallenged. He advocated that those Nazi sympathizers who refused to change their views within three years leave the church. Janz resisted all attempts to modify the ruling. Not all understood the inflexibility of the seventy-year old churchman. He personally witnessed the result of a German cultural-political identification in the 1918 *Selbstschutz* debacle and knew only too well the end result of the 1941-42 Mennonite co-operation with the Germans in the Ukraine. The issue was so self-evident: Mennonite flirtation with politics only brought disaster.

A fourth meeting devoted to reconciliation took place on September 28, 1947. On the basis of John 20:24ff Janz pointed to doubting Thomas who only needed to pray "My Lord and my God", a prayer open to anyone. In a second sermon based on Nehemiah 4 Janz urged his listeners to consolidate their spiritual gains and press forward. The day ended in special deliberations aimed at regulating the internal affairs of the church. An unexpected surprise awaited Janz. In honor of his seventieth birthday the congregation presented him with a cane made of twenty-seven different woods, "a symbol of what, with God's help and his own tireless efforts, has been accomplished: the unification of the three split Mennonite Brethren Churches of Fernheim."<sup>16</sup>

For Janz personally his public ministry in Paraguay was unique. He was not an evangelist or revival preacher. His own drawn-out conversion made him suspect of cheap and easy solutions to the question of faith. He believed that the mass evangelism techniques of North America produced conversions without repentance. For him a deep awareness of sin, contrition, the private prayer for forgiveness and the public confession were the marks of a becoming and growing Christian. What occurred in the Fernheim colony was spontaneous and uncontrived. Moreover there were the fruits of the Spirit. Once again he saw the religious piety he came to cherish as a newly-converted teacher in Russia. Here was also the kind of ethnic community which had shaped him at the turn of the century. Here he experienced no language barrier; there were as yet no serious problems relating to acculturation and assimilation; the intent of his preaching was clearly under-

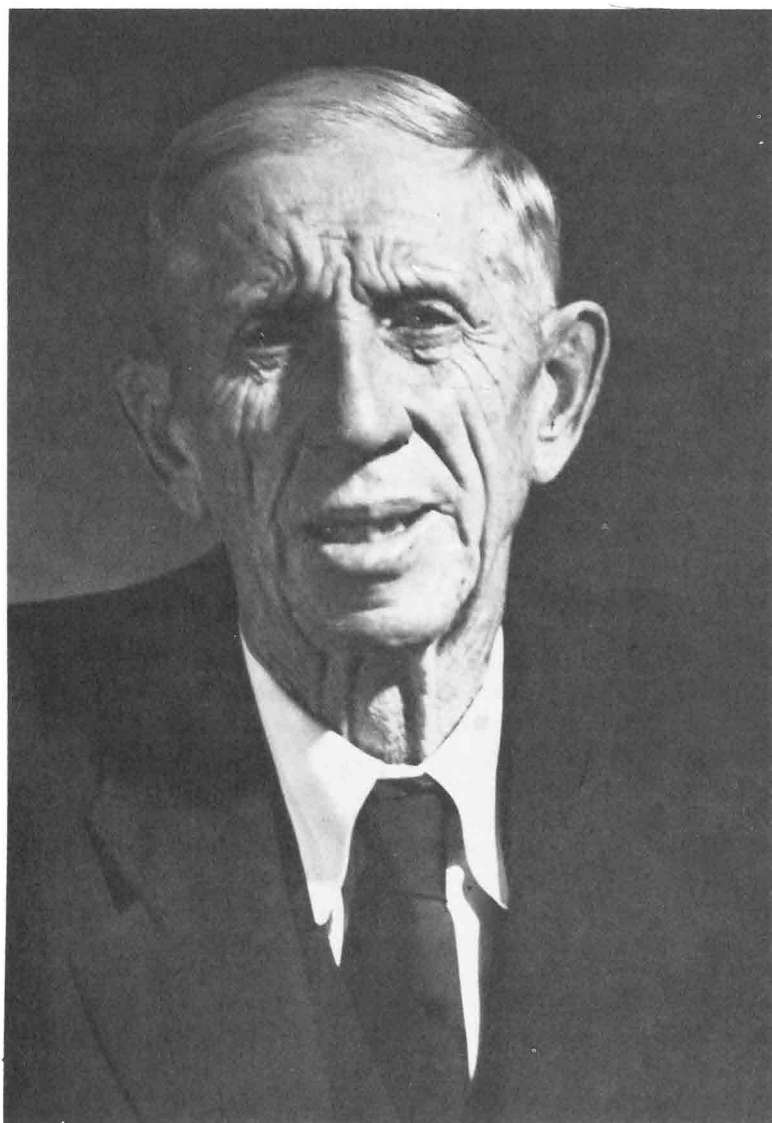
stood; the basic spiritual issues facing the community were so self-evident. "I have innerly become deeply related [to these people]," he reported to his home church. "These people I love."<sup>17</sup>

When he was about to leave Paraguay for Brazil in November Janz observed:

For me this means the last link in my ministry of finding the brethren. Thank God I found them in Paraguay in both the narrow and broad sense of the word. . . . After many inner struggles where the waters threatened to overwhelm the soul, after prayer and fasting the Lord has given me a tranquil and confident heart for my departure.<sup>18</sup>

Revival did not blind Janz to other pressing problems within the settlements. When he left Paraguay his contribution consisted of more than a ministry of reconciliation. He saw the economic condition of the older Mennonite colonies and realized what implications the mass influx of the displaced Russian and European Mennonites held.<sup>19</sup> Was there sufficient agricultural land on which to settle the newcomers? How much help would they need from Mennonites in North America? Would the new settlers be able to purchase enough cattle? Livestock was critical to survival in the Paraguayan Chaco. What about the establishment of textile factories and canneries? How would the many women who lost their husbands to Stalin's purges or the war manage on the new frontier? Where were the doctors and medical facilities to cope with the disease-prone tropics?

Finally, there was another dimension which deeply concerned Janz. Many of the newcomers grew up under Soviet or Nazi totalitarianism. They knew little of the faith of their fathers and had been subjected to strong anti-religious indoctrination. Where were the ministers and teachers capable of providing a new sense of direction? Equally important was the supply of Christian books and literature. His Paraguayan exposure strongly influenced Janz's activities during the next decade. If Paraguayan Mennonites were ever to become self-sufficient they required vast material aid. Spiritual growth depended on teachers and institutions. MCC was the logical agency to help in both areas. As it turned out MCC, in Janz's estimation, had some crucial blind spots.



**B. B. Janz in 1963.**



## Chapter XII

### *Ecumenicity And Denominationalism*

One of the speakers at a Coaldale commemorative service honoring Janz's immigration work recalled the first time he had met him at a Mennonite gathering in Ekaterinoslav. Janz, though a passing visitor, had agreed to preach. "During his sermon I came to the conclusion that he was a minister of our denomination [General Conference Mennonite]. . . . When Janz again visited us several months later I was completely convinced that he was our minister. Only in 1930, here in Coaldale, I learned he was your minister. But let me tell you if he is your minister, he is nevertheless our Benjamin Janz."<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1946, Janz reported to his friend C. F. Klassen about another festival celebrating the payment of the *Reiseschuld* in British Columbia. "An entire people (*Volk*), faith and class differences aside, were edified and nobly inspired over the successful completion of many difficult projects; over faithfulness to the end. The thanks to God and men was sincere and heartfelt."<sup>2</sup> The words *Volk* (people) and *Bruder* (brother) occurred frequently in Janz's correspondence. Usually they implied the Mennonite brotherhood nationally or internationally.

When it concerned the broader work of the church Janz was always an ecumenist. In Russia he had found that only a national Mennonite organization negotiated successfully with the Bolshevik government. In North America he observed how MCC, with its inter-Mennonite support, boasted impressive achievements in such areas as relief, resettlement and economic reconstruction. All this was as it should be. When the brotherhood worked together on common tasks they also built a common faith.

"How amazing was the co-operation which benefited all during the difficult years of suffering in the war, revolution and hunger of the Machno period," he commented to his old

friend, J. H. Janzen. "... Another thing: I never felt any waves of friction in the *Verband* between 1922 and 1926—all churches worked together. It was in fact a great day of salvation for the Mennonite people."<sup>3</sup> Janz had spoken of inter-Mennonite cooperation on one previous occasion. On May 24, 1926, a few days before he left Russia forever, he delivered his farewell address in the Mennonite Brethren Church in Tiege, Molotschna. He spoke of "a new period in the history of our people"; of the unity and of the differences between churches prior to 1914; of the unity and co-operation during calamity; of a "common searching after the Way of Life."<sup>4</sup>

Even Janz the newly-arrived immigrant never lost that vision of Mennonites working together. Shortly after coming to Canada he toured the various Mennonite churches in the eastern United States seeking aid for the Russian Mennonite settlers in Canada. The social and linguistic patterns he encountered contrasted sharply with his own background. Janz displayed no culture shock. These Mennonites who had become Americans were also his brethren and possessed qualities worth imitating. Amidst a new culture and a new language they had retained the vision of their forefathers and he felt comfortable in their midst: "I respected their courage and solidarity of character as much as any group or conference of Mennonites. In the question of nonresistance, for example, they have not been silent as is the case in some instances."<sup>5</sup>

Immediately following his arrival in Canada Janz became involved in the work of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. He was named a member in 1927. As such he naturally became enmeshed in its national and international concerns. Here, more than in any other capacity, he played his role as Janz the Mennonite internationalist and ecumenical spokesman. During the years 1929-30 most CMBC activity focused upon the mass flight of Mennonite and German settlers to Moscow, where they desperately sought exit visas. In the end most of the refugees were forcibly repatriated and sent to Siberian labor camps. Only some 5,000 found refuge in Germany. Since Canada refused to accept any more Mennonite immigrants, the majority were ultimately settled in Paraguay.

As Stalin consolidated his power in the early 1930's, both the Board and Janz personally lost touch with most of the Mennonites in Russia. Contact was only reestablished after World War II, when many Russian Mennonites found

themselves as displaced persons in Germany. Their resettlement in Canada, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay generated unprecedented inter-Mennonite co-operation. After Stalin's death in 1953 letters once more traversed the Iron Curtain and many long-lost relatives again found each other. No large-scale emigration from Russia was possible, however, and gradually the work and influence of the Board diminished. Its internationalism focused primarily upon Mennonites and when the need for relief and mass migration ended, the Board was faced with its own redundancy. Janz personally was extremely sensitive to the decline of the Board.

Though Janz worked internationally as a member of the Colonization Board, his more practical and perhaps more personal contribution to the Board occurred in the context of his own province, Alberta. The new Mennonite settlers faced a broad array of problems and in one way or another, most of these problems also concerned the Board. The new arrivals dared not become a liability to the Canadian Government. Severe physical illness, mental disorder, various civil or criminal offenses—any of these made the immigrant vulnerable to deportation. Janz spent considerable time investigating individual incidents of this sort. There were many special problem cases. Some immigrants were reluctant to pay their debts while others experienced difficulties in obtaining a farm. Young people occasionally left their registered place of domicile without notifying authorities. These had to be accounted for. Certain families remained separated because some members were medically unfit for entry to Canada.

"Here comes a special request," Janz informed his friend, David Toews. "Maria Regehr, single, age 50, totally blind on both eyes and resident in Tiege . . . seeks entry into Canada. In all her weakness and blindness she has always exhibited a great trust in the Lord, a true mother in Israel. I know it will be no easy thing to get an entry permit for a totally blind person."<sup>6</sup>

As in Russia, Janz's broad human sympathy still compelled him to make special pleas for special cases. He never believed something could not be done because it conflicted with established bureaucratic policy or procedure. In the final analysis men made such decisions and many of them were open to good influence. He had repeatedly experienced this, even in communist Russia.

As a member of a small, rural community, Janz encountered

another kind of ecumenicity. Coaldale was a predominantly Anglo-Saxon community before the Mennonite influx. Virtually overnight the majority became a minority. From the very onset there was antagonism and opposition. The regional branch of the United Farmers of Alberta campaigned vigorously against the Mennonites. On occasion there was adverse press coverage.

As experienced, aggressive farmers the newcomers intensified local economic competition. Accustomed to controlling their own schools in Russia, they were not adverse to electing their own candidates to the local school board. As an ethnic group with a long survival record, the Mennonites naturally resisted assimilation. Janz clearly understood the tensions generated by the Mennonite presence and the need for mutual trust and understanding. Since he knew very little English Janz could not play an active role in reconciling the two communities. Fortunately his brother Jacob, one of the first Mennonites elected to the Coaldale School Board, not only articulated Mennonite concerns in an adequate English, but kept brother Benjamin informed on the local state of affairs.

In other areas Benjamin's leadership was more obvious. In his own mind he was sure of the basic problem confronting his own immigrant community. In Russia he had already expressed concern about the assimilative pressures facing the Mennonites in Canada. Now in the new land he faced the problem directly. In the context of his own life experience Mennonite absorption had been avoided by stressing institutionalism. If the Mennonites were to survive effectively in Canada and especially in Coaldale, institutions would have to be built. Both a local and national focus was essential. Basic to the Mennonite community was the organization and nurture of the church. Mutual aid and concern was an expression of its mission. Janz strongly supported the formation of a medical society offering doctor and hospitalization insurance at low premiums; the building of the Coaldale hospital; the organization of a burial society.<sup>7</sup> Following the Second World War Janz spearheaded the founding of another institution, the Alberta Mennonite High School. On a national level he wholeheartedly endorsed the founding of the Mennonite mental hospital, "Bethesda," and the Mennonite Brethren College in Winnipeg.

*Canadian General Conference of Mennonites*

Janz's ecumenicity was nowhere more nobly expressed than

in his relations with the General Conference of Mennonites in Canada. If anything, his early religious experiences alienated him from this Conference, even though his parents joined it when they migrated to Russia in 1873. In contrast to the highly personal nature of his protracted conversion, the Rudnerweide church of his youth appeared formal and liturgical. Rather early in his Christian pilgrimage he associated the General Conference in Russia with *Volkskirche*, because it embraced most of the Mennonite community. As we have seen, Janz saw the church only as a voluntary association of true believers. At what point then did Janz the ecumenist become Janz the denominationalist? In speaking or writing to members of his own denomination Janz frequently advocated the uniqueness and singularity of the Mennonite Brethren church. Why co-operation on the one hand and sectarianism on the other?

His strong views on the character of the free church, which he felt the Brethren exemplified, somewhat explain his partiality. While he never denied the possibility of enlightenment and new life in the *Volkskirche* setting, the deepest riches of that experience occurred only in fellowship with like-minded brothers. "Of course we worked together in Russia," he informed a colleague in South America, "but not in Bible study or church growth."<sup>8</sup>

Common problems and projects like the forestry service, an institute for the deaf and a mental hospital brought Mennonites together. In 1917 and 1918 cooperation again focused on general issues such as schools and nonresistance. During the early 1920's they cooperated via the *Verband* in matters of emigration and reconstruction. All this was as it should be. It was symbolic of a common Christian commitment, but it did not imply the same quality of religious experience in the life and work of the local church. In all the broader social issues facing Christians, however, close cooperation was absolutely essential.

In July, 1945, the General Conference Mennonites, meeting at Eigenheim, Saskatchewan, decided to organize their own relief committee. This simply meant an end to cooperation with the Mennonite Brethren in this field of endeavor. Janz was deeply disturbed by the decision. In a long letter to his friend J. J. Thiessen he penned his concern. Nowhere else does his ecumenicity find better expression.

Again and again I come to the conclusion that, before God, the only acceptable, large-scale relief policy is a cooperative one. . . . My heart was uplifted at the beginning of the war when I witnessed the brotherly cooperation at the large general meetings of the various groups in Winkler, Saskatoon, Coaldale etc.; that was also the case in the committee sessions. It was a surge of brotherhood, a unity in crisis. It has certainly been high-minded and honorable to uphold brotherly cooperation all these years in matters relating to our *Reiseschuld* and the mentally ill. . . . There is something good in the fact that both groups in Alberta have for years conducted common Bible conferences which aimed at deepening and edification in the Word of God—and not only a final resting together in one and the same cemetery. With a sense of inner satisfaction I think of the speaking tours I made with brother David Toews in the various churches, especially in Ontario. What an integration; what a special blessing.<sup>9</sup>

Why was it that only major crises brought the Mennonites together? The inter-Mennonite conferences in Russia came in response to government pressures for an alternative service program. Joint Bible conferences were held in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution and the terror which followed.

. . . When the crises diminished our Bible conferences ran into difficulties and tensions arose. During that time the teacher Cornelius Wiens of Halbstadt, our wise Gamaliel who advocated tolerance and understanding, observed: "Why can't our religious leaders get together. Must they be imprisoned in the cellar again so that they learn to pray together?" It came to that. Leaders and followers suffered and struggled together in prison and exile—even in death. Have we learned nothing, especially we who miraculously escaped that suffering? . . . I had really hoped that the longer we were here, the better things would get; that churches, in the framework of their own congregations would strive for deeper life and humility; that youth would strive for a decisive Christianity in schools, Bible schools and conference youth work—here in free Canada with all its possibilities.<sup>10</sup>

What kept Mennonites from working together? They could still remain loyal to their own church and conference. What

prevented the entire Mennonite family from practicing charity? Doctrinal questions after all were not involved. All Mennonites wished to practice nonresistance and offer relief to the needy. Were the bonds of cooperation broken or not? Was there still hope?

Innerly I weep over the loss [of cooperation] and am deeply shattered. One situation causes me special grief. When I came from Russia the Mennonite Brethren Conference was alienated from the General Conference, and particularly from the Board in Rosthern. . . . I made the greatest efforts to bridge the gulf by stressing relief work in connection with the immigration [to Canada in the 1920's]. With the former editor of *Vorwaerts*, recently deceased, I discussed toleration in the press. I recommended to the leading brethren of the Mennonite Brethren General Conference (later also the Canadian Conference), that brother David Toews be invited to give a report.<sup>11</sup>

Now the General Conference Mennonites, by electing their own relief committee, choose to move in a new direction. Was there no more working together? Why not still talk and write about the problem? "The existing misunderstandings are not so great that they cannot be set aside; we are not so proud that we can't humble ourselves. . . . Let's not split but heal and serve as never before."<sup>12</sup> J. J. Thiessen in a frank, open letter to Janz, observed that a lack of cooperation from Mennonite Brethren representatives on the Western Relief Committee necessitated the General Conference withdrawal. They had tried to work together, but it was impossible.<sup>13</sup>

For Janz the dissolution of the Western Relief Committee was a deep personal blow. The crisis of war had passed and once again each Mennonite group went its own way. In the end, however, love rather than anger prevailed.

Your letter gave me much to think, reflect and pray about. To me personally it radiates an unchanged brotherliness. You are right! By God's grace "no shadow has clouded our friendship during the entire period of our work together." . . . Even today that bolsters mutual trust. We were young then and at times rash, yet things progressed well and improved steadily. Now with an added twenty years of experience and with a more mature faith in the Lord Jesus—I'm 68 and you're?—is not all

this also a kind of guarantee for a further happy journey and a common labor? Soon we will come home where, from the standpoint of the light above, we will be ashamed of our present difficulties and almost be tempted to utter "forgive!"—but then all will be forgiven and expunged.<sup>14</sup>

Janz spoke of the "nicest chapter in Canadian Mennonite history" in reference to his work with the General Conference, especially the work of resettlement through the Board of Colonization and Elder David Toews. In his opinion "a magnificent work was done with a warm heart, tolerance and fine tact."<sup>15</sup> The collection of the *Reiseschuld* stood as a monument to the "grace of God and the working of all churches as one inspired soul. . . ."<sup>16</sup> What would one group or conference have been able to do by itself? As of 1948 the entire cost of the migration with its "spending and spending" was paid. Never before had the Mennonites in Canada performed so splendidly.

#### *Mennonite Central Committee*

In 1921-22 many Russian Mennonites were saved from death by famine through the generosity of MCC. Janz, as VBHH chairman, not only interacted with the relief agency, but also observed the tremendous encouragement it offered to despondent Mennonites throughout Russia. The agency provided relief and self-help programs designed to restore self-sufficiency and for Janz these two focal points came to constitute the essence of the organization's mandate. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's Janz remained its staunch supporter. Naturally the food distribution and resettlement efforts sponsored by MCC after World War II received Janz's wholehearted endorsement.

The MCC and the Canadian Board of Colonization worked together in the maintenance of refugee camps, children's homes and community centers; the placing of young men and women in positions of voluntary service; the movement and resettlement of Mennonite refugees. While Janz was in Paraguay during 1947 the Volendam docked in Buenos Aires with some 2,305 refugees. On March 13, 1948, another 860 Mennonites arrived on the *General Stuart* and *Heintzelman*.<sup>17</sup> MCC was on hand to feed, clothe and settle these displaced persons. Once again the agency fulfilled its historic calling.<sup>18</sup>

Janz's initial reservations concerning MCC activities surfaced in 1948. The agency undertook to support several



ministers for each of the respective Mennonite conferences in South America. "If MCC would only remember that it is a relief organization, not a mission board . . ." <sup>19</sup> he wrote. By the end of the year he was incensed, for MCC had cut back its spending among the South American Mennonites in favor of new programs elsewhere. MCC spent three and three-quarter million dollars a year, but refused to spend a few extra thousand for the special needs of the brethren in the south! Hundreds of letters speaking of the need were arriving, yet the organization assigned priority five or six to its own coreligionists.

Why not publish the following picture in the next MCC newsletter? A rather stooped woman, standing with a staff in her hand and three or four children around her. She has a huge burden of three or four sacks on her back. "On one you write 'transportation debt'; on another 'land debt'; on the next 'inventory debt', on the last one at the very top you write 'maintenance'. This sack must be standing upright and open still being filled by a man whose face is familiar because he himself is a part of that sack (MCC). What kind of caption do you write underneath—'In the Name of Christ'?" <sup>20</sup> Was it right to spend money for the South American Mennonites in the name of Christ, then to record it all as debt and only cancel it bit by bit? What of the immigrants' morale?

Initially Janz's quarrel with MCC stemmed directly from its fiscal policies in Paraguay and Uruguay. In an unprecedented act of practical love and Christian idealism MCC had brought hundreds of people from Europe to South America. Monies were extended for land purchases and maintenance. Then by 1949 it became clear that the majority of these funds were conceived of as loans not gifts. Janz was angry: "Pious, Bible-believing MCC came with love and help. Everyone clung to the brethren from North America in love and trust. Now in the course of one year that which was promised and given in word and deed is withdrawn." <sup>21</sup> He believed in substantial material aid for the new Mennonite settlements in South America, for he had seen the need in 1947. Moreover, many of the new settlers had relatives in Canada and news of incredible hardships almost daily reached Canada. Canadian Mennonites were expecting MCC to help. The situation in the south could not be assessed by "MCC workers moving through the settlements, staying at the best places and eating the best food." <sup>22</sup>

The settlement of Mennonite immigrants in South America had just been completed and now MCC was drastically reducing its support, a policy which Janz found totally unacceptable. "In all my public declarations," he wrote, "I have firmly advocated that the great need in the south be met first, then [the needs of] other relief programs."<sup>23</sup> The annual MCC meeting in Chicago in 1950 became something of a watershed in Janz's relations with MCC. To a friend he described his experience:

On October 6, at the MCC evening meeting in Chicago we two, brother C. A. DeFehr and I, in a highly painful manner were called to account for our one-sided advocacy of aid to our Paraguayan brethren in need and our lack of concern for general relief in the world at large. They were right! First of all we want to bring the brethren in need on their feet and then are prepared to help on a more general basis . . . The brethren in need are being pressed to sign for the repayment [of the MCC loans] by 1953. They can see clearly that they can not do so by 1953 and so have hesitated to sign.<sup>24</sup>

Janz's concern over MCC policy in South America was shared by many of his General Conference and Mennonite Brethren colleagues in Western Canada. When the Board of Colonization met in March, 1951, it designated a good portion of its budget as aid to the southern Mennonite colonies. "According to Galatians 6:10," he informed MCC director Orie Miller, "we have the obligation to first build up the brethren of the faith in the south."<sup>25</sup>

Part of his quarrel with MCC also stemmed from the fact that the agency discontinued its support of schools in Paraguay early in 1951. Throughout his life he retained a strong empathy for the institutionalism of the Russian Mennonite setting, especially schools. In a frontier setting like Paraguay, they were essential for spiritual and cultural survival. Why then was MCC so irresponsible?

Janz's frustration with MCC was not only rooted in the organization's restricted South American policies. He saw the agency developing a distinct theology under the slogan "peace witness". The Old Mennonites of the eastern United States and Canada played a dominant role in formulating this ideological stance, especially one of their key leaders, H. S.

Bender. As it turned out, Janz's view of nonresistance clashed with Bender's in at least two areas.

The first involved their respective concepts of alternative service. The positions of both men were directly rooted in their own life experiences. Bender lived in a world in which nonresistance was a negotiable item with a government constitutionally bound to provide equal protection under the law. Amid such circumstances the peace principle could be rigorously defined and applied. Bender viewed alternative service in a medical or civic capacity as being too partial to the interests of the state and the military. Janz and his forefathers knew only totalitarianism. Czarist absolutism after 1870 demanded Mennonite service in the czarist forests and the Red Cross. This fact was a normal feature of the world in which Janz grew up. He personally spent several years in state service. Between 1914 and 1918 hundreds of Mennonite young men served on the hospital trains of the Russian Red Cross. Some lost their lives, others fell into German captivity. Janz saw in all of this a valid application of the Mennonite peace position.

Fundamental to Janz's peace thinking was the principle that the Christian was called to heal and uphold the principle of life. This position remained unchanged throughout World War II and labeled Janz decidedly left of centre among his North American coreligionists. In the context of his own life experience he came to see nonresistance as an affair of the heart and not a formulated creed or conference resolution. He even tried to love and understand the Mennonite boys in active military service.

Though Janz's "liberalism" surfaced during the Canadian Mennonite negotiations with Ottawa in the early 1940's, the government's decision to allow only a civilian alternative service effectively silenced Janz's insistence on some type of medical unit not under military jurisdiction, but capable of serving at the front lines. During the war years Mennonites in both the United States and Canada negotiated the nonresistance question with their respective governments and so the issue never really involved MCC. The high priorities assigned to relief and resettlement between 1945 and 1948 allowed the issue to lie dormant. In January, 1949, Janz attended an inter-Mennonite meeting in Winnipeg. During the course of the discussions on nonresistance MCC representatives questioned whether alternative service as such was a valid

expression of the peace principle. Janz was upset. What right did MCC have to impose its theological views? "The MCC is growing into an institution dominating all existing conferences; it is a melting pot designed to bring the various groups into line."<sup>26</sup>

MCC's emphasis on "peace witness" was not only a rejection of alternative service, but it promoted an almost Gandhian type of pacifism designed to end war on a world-wide basis.

Now comes the great peace propaganda directed towards Europe. . . . To be sure the peace insight is not only for Mennonites and Quakers, but for all true Jesus disciples. Making the "dead" Mennonites in Europe into pacifists is a questionable proposition. They must first become alive. . . . I fear the entire movement runs on two lines, the one group emphasizing Christian nonresistance, the other a worldwide pacifism featuring the passive resistance of Gandhi and a world peace imposed by the large churches of the world. . . . It is still not Jesus' Kingdom of Peace.<sup>27</sup>

The excessive talk of a "peace witness" at MCC meetings was not in accord with historic Anabaptism. "This one biblical truth is constantly being held up as if it were number one in the salvation experience," Janz commented when returning from a Mennonite Peace Conference at Winona Lake in 1954. "The really cardinal truth of the new life is never mentioned; the biblical and also historic Mennonite principle of the believing church never surfaces."<sup>28</sup>

In Europe non-resistance was not lost because Mennonites entered noncombatant service programs; they lacked new life. In North America, in spite of all sermons and all precautions, half of the Mennonites in both the General Conference and Mennonite Brethren traditions joined the army. How could there be a peace witness except for repentance and renewal? A forceable imposition meant many excommunications. "We hang ornaments on a Christmas tree which have never grown there. . . . Do not search for the lost peace principle in the gables of the structure but in the foundation. New life is lacking."<sup>29</sup> Janz's conversion decades earlier still played a determinative role in his theology. He had been a traditional Mennonite and pacifist, then found new life. Only then did the superstructure have a proper foundation.

The pursuit of "peace witness" in a doctrinal sense necessarily involved MCC in service areas best reserved for

denominations. Janz saw MCC was emerging as a conference in its own right, with all the calculating politics connected with such an organization. In 1949 the MCC established a Canadian Branch at Waterloo, Ontario, which almost immediately made contact with officials in Ottawa regarding immigration questions. Normally the Canadian government dealt with the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. Why this tactic? "We have never gone to Washington," Janz declared! He was becoming very disturbed about MCC's entire mode of operation.

More and more I am laboring under the distinct impression that our worthy relief institution is growing into a super-conference. In the small context of the executive all actual guidelines are drawn up. There is no access nor the opportunity to speak words; it is not desirable that one is present and of a contrary opinion. The election of officials is not open, brotherly or democratic. A nominating committee presents a slate of officers; they are always the same. I would be satisfied if the organization strictly moved along the relief line. Much has come in that directly attacks the sovereignty of the conference, especially the Mennonite Brethren [Conference].<sup>30</sup>

Janz's correspondence after 1950 distinctly reflected his disillusionment with MCC. The organization was deviating from its historic mandate and competing with the established conferences of the various Mennonite groups as a conference in its own right. "I have attended the annual MCC meetings for some years," he informed P.C. Hiebert, "(they are) routine and formal; the large meeting is essentially decorative since the inner circle of the executive does everything, the others are there to say 'yes.' This time it will not be any different. As a result something new and epoch-making can simply not happen."<sup>31</sup> For Janz MCC became a "relief organization meddling in conference affairs. . ."<sup>32</sup> Certainly the various groups had worked well together and had drawn closer to each other. That was as it should be, "but pressing for a closer relationship from the top of a super-conference is not fair."<sup>33</sup> Tersely he reminded Orie Miller, "We are a relief organization, not a Mennonite conference or super-conference."<sup>34</sup> To his U.S. co-worker and friend, H.R. Wiens, he observed, "With regard to the peace question you in the

United States must comply directly, since for you MCC with regard to the peace issue is the direct super-conference and nothing can be done to change that."<sup>35</sup>

Certainly Janz had his reservations about some organizations and even some individuals. There were times when these doubts affected his sense of brotherhood, yet behind the Janz who disagreed with MCC policy and theology was another Janz who loved all of God's children. When a new church in Neuland, Paraguay, wondered about the participation of non-members at the Lord's Supper. Janz gave explicit counsel.

Recognize each child of God as such; love it with all your heart; be warm and friendly. . . I beg of you, love every true child of God even when the graveclothes have not been removed from the living Lazarus. Unbind them and let them walk - with love, not with the law. Even when the question does not pertain to the Lord's Supper but to one who is alive with the living - recognize and love every life which Jesus has planted. . . Your love must be greater than your law.<sup>36</sup>

## *Chapter XIII*

### *Life's Tragedies*

World War II represented the last great era of service for B.B. Janz. For the next decade he still participated fully in the life of the Mennonite brotherhood, especially in the problems faced by his coreligionists in South America. Everywhere he still felt wanted and needed. At home, however, he faced a major problem. In a letter to his life-long friend, J.J. Thiessen, Janz explained his dilemma: "Together we face a serious decision. The farm is difficult to manage because we are very much alone. If we leave I have as yet no indication from above where we shall go."<sup>1</sup> Not only age and lack of help figured in the decision, but the health of his dear Maria. For some years she had been afflicted with high blood pressure and her condition became especially critical in 1945.<sup>2</sup> They retired to a modest cottage just north of Coaldale and though Maria suffered periodic attacks, her condition improved sufficiently for Janz to leave for South America in 1947. Of their retirement Janz later wrote: "Now came the finest years of our life, and we hoped that the future would bring many more of them."<sup>3</sup> It was not to be.

#### *Farewell Maria*

Rather suddenly on October 1, 1953, Maria experienced renewed high blood pressure. Her pain increased towards evening. That night she slept little. Next morning she was unable to carry out her normal duties. By noon the attending doctor diagnosed a heart attack and ordered immediate hospitalization. For the first time in forty-eight years the Janz household was deprived of her. The weights of the Russian Mennonite clock which she customarily raised every night touched the floor and the clock stopped. It was symbolic of what lay ahead. In the hospital her condition deteriorated. Janz was almost constantly at her bedside. He later recalled those tragic days.

In her [typically] undemanding fashion, she suffered in silence, especially at night. She did not want to disturb the hospital personnel. . . . Rather endure and serve than be served. . . . That is how she was throughout her life. . . . Now came three difficult days and nights. The doctor still held out hope, but in spite of all efforts her condition deteriorated. . . . Although she remained fully conscious we sensed the breath of eternity in the sickroom. "Mother, can't you come home to us again?" In answer to my question that last afternoon she quietly shook her head. She had just tried to speak to her daughter, but could not be understood. After two attempts she gave up.

What a heartrending adieu! The parting hour came on October 13, early at 4:30 A.M. Quietly, without any special death struggle, her life expired and the noble heart stood still. Overcome through the blood of the Lamb. . . . How serenely she lay there on her deathbed, a picture of deep peace, shall I say joy? . . . Sobbing is heard in the room. We close with prayer and leave. Parting - an unforgettable, consecrated moment.<sup>4</sup>

Candidly Janz jotted down his inner agony at the passing of his Maria.

Where does the road go from here or does it even go further? For forty-eight years of life's journey together. There were special difficulties for the wife because of the many absences of a husband involved in public ministry. First a five-year separation in perilous Bolshevik Russia with the constant threat of deprivation at home and the daily danger to my life. In Canada public service brought absences from family and farm, including a year in South America. . . . [it was] too heavy a burden for her, the wife.

But that, too, is at an end. Eternally free and at home. The great responsibilities are laid down; she has endured and overcome in all the deprivations and extremities. But there is another dimension above all this bearing, enduring, and struggle alone with family and farm. Without this quiet, patient, praying, concerned, active support in the poverty and life of those days it would have been simply impossible for the husband to endure. . . . Humanly speaking, there would have been no emigration in the twenties.



Mother once more came into her home for a short service [prior to the funeral] with family, relatives and close friends. But there was no word from her, no managing hand. The real house clock is no longer there. The soul of the home has left.<sup>5</sup>

Some weeks later Janz confided to J. J. Thiessen that he was approaching the loneliest Christmas of his life. Not only Christmas, 1953, but the years ahead were lonely. Maria's fortitude in all matters related to family and farm allowed Janz to serve his brotherhood for decades. Perhaps he took it for granted at times. In the years of solitude following her death Janz learned how wide-ranging her love and service on his behalf had really been. Janz lived alone for one year after Maria's death. Then he and his widowed sister, Margareta, set up housekeeping together. The arrangement lasted almost nine years, after which his sister went to live with her children in Winnipeg and then Ontario.<sup>6</sup>

### *Peter*

The Janz's were latecomers as far as the migration from Russia in the 1920's was concerned. They arrived during the second half of 1926, settling in Winnipeg for the winter. Peter, the eldest son, left Russia ahead of his family and found farm work in Ontario. Separated from his family and kinfolk, he came under the dissipating influence of the itinerant laborers with whom he worked. By the time he was reunited with his family his values and lifestyle left much to be desired.

Janz was deeply shocked by his son's flagrant apostasy and his concern for Peter's spiritual welfare became deep and heartfelt. Was he over-anxious? Was he unable to contain his fears in Peter's presence? Did he judge his son too harshly? Why not casual conversations emanating love instead of spiritual admonition? Whatever the reasons, Peter's sense of alienation from his father, family and relatives was real. Though Peter's farm adjoined his father's, contact between the two was infrequent. Peter still joined the wedding and Christmas celebrations of the clan, but here too were subtle reminders of his estrangement. In order to accommodate sensitive relatives he always left the house to smoke outdoors. Often when he returned it was time for hymn singing, Scripture reading and prayer. Thanks to a generous sprinkling of ministerial talent such clan sessions were not

only of tedious duration, but served to remind Peter of his impiety and religious shortcomings. By contrast his pub friends were more accepting and less judgmental. Whatever tensions existed between father and son one thing was certain: throughout his life Janz remained deeply concerned about Peter.

On January 23, 1945, a special meeting commemorating Janz's immigration work was held in the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church. Congratulations poured in from churches in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Janz was invited to speak. Deeply stirred by the kind words directed towards him and the large check he received, his remarks lacked the usual sense of deliberation and precision. Publicly he expressed his inner agony, "What is the value of service if one loses his own child on account of it. That's still the situation. I feel - if no dollars came and only prayers were spoken - might I not be saved with my entire household?"<sup>7</sup>

Little changed in subsequent years. On occasion father and son met, chatted and went their separate ways. Late during the evening of March 2, 1957, tragedy struck. Upon leaving the pub in Coaldale Peter and his friend, Norman Wiebe, went for a joyride. Thirty miles east of Coaldale the car struck a power-pole, killing both its occupants.

Janz's brother Jacob heard of the accident first. He came to Benjamin's home, rousing him by knocking on the bedroom window and informing him of the death of his son. Janz had been discharged from the hospital several days earlier. "Now came the severest blow of my life, the sudden death of my oldest son in the knowledge that he left no testimony of eternal life."<sup>8</sup> Two years later, writing to his longtime friend, C.A. DeFehr, Janz articulated the personal implications of the tragedy:

For a time I could not pray. I began again and again, but each time something stood in the way, criticising, accusing—now your prayer doesn't help any more. . . . How I agonized for that boy!

Something will soon happen. An agonizing well nigh to death; my nerves almost gave way. Psalm 55:22: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Well, God, I'm collapsing, can do nothing more, now You worry about his salvation. The firm conviction was that God,

not the one from below, would have the last word and victory. On the afternoon of Saturday, March 2, we met outside the post office. A conversation then, "Pete, I want to continue living until you have become a new man!" He gazed at me for a long time without a word. I looked at him. Finally he said, "I must go, things are waiting over there." Five hours later he was dead without regaining consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

As late as April, 1963, Janz wrote, "The wound has not healed to this day, though the spirit submits to the disposition of God."<sup>10</sup> Spiritually the episode brought on almost insurmountable testing, in which "I seriously questioned Providence."<sup>11</sup> His friend, J.J. Thiessen, recalled several occasions following Peter's death when Janz observed, "how difficult it is to know now, that I will not meet Peter in glory."<sup>12</sup> Even during his last months in hospital he found it difficult to come to terms with Peter's death.<sup>13</sup> Why had God done this to him? Had he not served him with all his heart?

### *Illness and Redundancy*

Until at least 1950 Janz's massive correspondence makes little reference to the state of his own personal health. Rather suddenly, a series of ailments emerged, some of which plagued him to his dying day. In January, 1952, he informed his fellow members on the Mennonite Brethren *Dienst am Evangelium* committee that he had been hospitalized for an appendectomy. "As you can see, dear brethren, the Lord has unharnessed me for a time. Even though I can't help along actively I will pray for you and the work."<sup>14</sup> Naturally there was concern whether a frail man of seventy-five would survive the operation. Janz's condition was ". . . so deserving of special attention that in a short period of time the (hospital) personnel has administered over forty dollars worth of hypos and pills; they also thought I had conducted myself rather bravely."<sup>15</sup>

Janz's rather laconic statement marked the beginning of an unfortunate malady. Whether the fault ultimately lay with a medical profession over-committed to drug cures, or with a Janz constantly in pain, is difficult to judge. As the years passed, Janz, normally a man of rigorous discipline and self-control, was more and more compelled to rely on various medications to ease severe physical discomforts. In a very real

way the last decade of his life became a struggle between an inner spirit, wilful and always determined, and a body, always frail and becoming frailer.

Janz fully recovered from his appendectomy. "Yes, praise God, he laid one near seventy-five on the sickbed and restored him again," he informed his friend, C.F. Klassen.<sup>16</sup> There was one disturbing note. He was well physically, but "the intellectual powers lack perseverance."<sup>17</sup> Physically Janz's good fortune did not last. In March, 1953, he developed severe urinary complications and received specialist care at the Calgary General Hospital. "The whole affair was more severe for me than is normally experienced."<sup>18</sup> Janz wondered what the future held for him, if in the words of John's Gospel "When thou shalt be old . . . another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."<sup>19</sup>

Life became more normal in 1954. Janz managed to continue his voluminous correspondence and even attended several conferences, one of which took him as far as Ontario. The signs of his gradual physical deterioration became more and more frequent. Convinced that he needed more exercise, Janz began to work in his garden. He decided to grow dahlias - on a rather massive scale. The rows were long and the varieties many. Not infrequently he arrived at his sister's house carrying a prize blossom spanning some fifteen inches, then casually inquired about the size of her dahlias. Gardener Janz - dressed in old clothes, rubber boots and irrigating his dahlias - became a common sight to local residents passing his modest residence just north of Coaldale. "At home I walk about in the coarsest clothes and work in the garden," he informed a friend. "This in order to keep body and spirit more in balance. Otherwise I cannot endure it. . . . Overall I sense my time shortens."<sup>20</sup>

During the next two years (1955-56) Janz's letters contain virtually no reference to the state of his personal health. Once more he was able to pour his energies into the work of *Dienst am Evangelium*. As always he focused strongly on the Mennonites in South America, suggesting more teachers for their schools; preaching and special lectures by visiting ministers; more books for church and village libraries.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately his health took a turn for the worse early in 1957. On February 1, his brother Jacob informed C.A. DeFehr in Winnipeg that ". . . Janz was suddenly hospitalized during the night of January 30-31. The cause was the reoccurrence of

an old malady.”<sup>22</sup> His condition progressively worsened and he was again hospitalized in February. By mid-summer his Lethbridge specialist, Dr. Livingston, advocated major surgery. “It depresses me,” Janz confided to J.J. Thiessen. “Will I manage it?”<sup>23</sup>

By August it was apparent that Janz’s health was too frail for the ordeal. “The major operation was not to be . . . though my specialist assured me he will ‘fix me up.’ ”<sup>24</sup> With typical tenacity he still planned to attend the Hillsboro meetings of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Welfare and Public Relations in October, 1957, “if the circumstances normalize.”<sup>25</sup> He did not travel to Hillsboro, nevertheless he managed to attend the forty-seventh General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. At the conference he expressed his wish to retire from public service. After all, he had reached eighty and his health did not permit him to carry on. On the other hand he would assist where he could. Janz’s longtime co-worker, P.C. Hiebert, also submitted his resignation. The conference thanked both for their long and faithful service.<sup>26</sup>

Janz left the Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church that evening with mixed emotions. His public ministry was officially at an end. Why was the Conference so final about it? Why did they have to “quickly find proper replacements?”<sup>27</sup> His advanced years and poor health notwithstanding, there were still things he could do and he had suggested this to the Conference. It in turn thanked him for “devoted and sacrificial services” and spoke of replacements. “Now they have discharged me!” he confided to a friend as they walked towards their lodgings. A physically ailing Janz without public office may have accepted the inevitable, but not a Janz whose health was almost normal during the last months of 1957. “In spite of my official resignation I still have a primary responsibility,” he informed C.A. DeFehr.<sup>28</sup>

On January 24-25, 1958, there was to be an MCC meeting in Chicago and then another meeting in Hillsboro. Travel plans were complete. Illness intervened. Janz was discharged from the hospital on February 21. Five days later he wondered if his health would permit him to attend the Board of Reference and Counsel meetings some weeks away. Again he was disappointed. In midsummer he was well enough to visit C. A. DeFehr in Winnipeg.

In November he was again hospitalized. He expressed one

concern. "A few days ago I was . . . discharged . . . after my fourth operation. For a time I must protect myself against all winter weather . . . and will miss taking part in the Alberta *Vertreter-Versammlung* (Alberta Inter-Mennonite Meeting)" <sup>29</sup> Yet when the delegates met at Coaldale on December 10-11, 1958, Janz was not only there, he even participated in the deliberations. <sup>30</sup> "I have felt so at home in these meetings," he wrote, "there was always the spirit of love and mercy." <sup>31</sup> It was the last such meeting he attended. It seemed so appropriate that the delegates concentrated on questions of immigration and aid to South American Mennonites.

The new year saw Janz optimistic and hopeful. It was true his specialist had worked with him for some two and one half months. At eighty years of age one recovered from operations slowly. Certainly attendance at the annual MCC meeting in Chicago (January 19-20, 1959) was out of the question, though the thought crossed Janz's mind. Surely he would find new energy, especially for writing. "Innerly I have increasing confidence I will become a few years younger and that I can get with it once more." <sup>32</sup> It was not to be. "You want my annual report (Janz was still chairman of Mennonite Central Relief Committee of Canada) for the two conferences (Mennonite Brethren and Conference of Mennonites in Canada) this summer," he informed C.A. DeFehr. "I have already published the relief report for the last year in the [various] papers." <sup>33</sup> More and more it became apparent that any further travel was out of the question. In a Christmas letter to close friends he mentioned another operation, the fact that his health had improved and his determination to begin writing his memoirs, a task "for which the Lord is equipping me anew." <sup>34</sup>

Perhaps Janz misread his Lord's intent. His condition worsened during the following year. He suffered from severe headaches and simply could not write. Frustration and impatience mounted. "Seven years of suffering and testing and nothing could or can be done . . . my (physical) condition is always the sore point whenever I want to make headway with my writing." <sup>35</sup> The specialist was still reassuring, but Janz sensed that his current treatments or even another operation promised no betterment. After fourteen days in the hospital and sixteen days at home he was back to square one! <sup>36</sup> The following year saw little change. "I wanted to answer (your letter) as soon as the Lord made all things well,

that is healed me. . . . "I've had so much patience, and spoken with the Father above again and again."<sup>37</sup> Janz knew he needed patience and faith. There was no easy onetime solution to his physical problem, yet perhaps another doctor at another place (Rochester Clinic - Minnesota) could help him. He still hoped "to be free and in good health during the lovely summer."<sup>38</sup>

Janz's condition stabilized but did not improve during the summer of 1961.<sup>39</sup> Other complications unfortunately set in. An eye infection lasting months virtually prevented him from reading and writing. Frequent bouts of constipation completely restricted him to his home. He no longer thought in terms of being able to write his memoirs - perhaps if he recorded them and someone else typed them.<sup>40</sup> Medical crises continued to intervene. "Again I have experienced a wave of suffering," he informed J. J. Thiessen. "It was of a moderate nature, culminating in a six-day hospitalization and taking considerable time to normalize."<sup>41</sup> The fall was beautiful, so conducive to work, but he could do nothing - "a man can not take anything except it be given him from heaven."<sup>42</sup> At eighty-five years of age he rarely complained about missing committee meetings.

One last task remained—his book. "The book could have been completed except for these difficulties. My infirmity has often made me very unhappy; its not an illness, only the weakness of old age. . . . With God's help I have not given up hope. . . . When I see how the past (emigration of the 1920's) is already so erroneously interpreted, my desire to present my testimony (view) intensifies."<sup>43</sup>

Towards the end of 1962 it became apparent that Janz was unable to manage alone. Reluctantly he accepted his oldest daughter's invitation to move to British Columbia. By January, 1963, he was comfortably settled at the Abbotsford home of Henry and Helen Thiessen. "I have found the finest accommodation with my eldest daughter Helen," he informed an old acquaintance, ". . . I can wish for nothing better."<sup>44</sup> Janz was even able to write again. Every page brought him nearer to his goal. A number of key chapters relating to his emigration work were complete. "I can't write much more about our story of struggle and deliverance - there was joy and sorrow and guilt and I can't see how it will be possible to end it properly."<sup>45</sup> There was more to tell but he could not write it

down. On several occasions he related experience after experience after the noon meal was completed. As the months slipped by one thing became obvious. What was written was written. There would be no more.<sup>46</sup> Steadily his health deteriorated.



## *Chapter XIV*

### *Dying*

Whether Janz realized it or not, his journey to British Columbia marked the end of a lifetime of travel. "I'm not exactly enthusiastic about my trip to B.C.," he confessed to friends DeFehr and Thiessen, "but there is the hope that the climate will benefit me."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately even the moist, gentle climate of the Fraser Valley produced no cure for the frailties of old age. The old maladies continued to plague him. Modern medicine could do little for him. "Have I come to the last station?" he wrote to an old friend.<sup>2</sup> There was one consolation, the patient loving care of his children, Henry and Helen Thiessen. Then too, there was one item of unfinished business: his book on the emigration from Russia. "I can inform you that a thick manuscript concerning my activities is at hand, but it is far from complete. . . . I have everything needed to finish the task at hand. . . . It is not possible. I'm waiting for the hour chosen by the Father above when I (once again) have a clear head for my work - as yet no parting for the eternal dwellings."<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately the bad days far outnumbered the good during the summer and fall of 1963. He needed specialized, almost hourly care which the Thiessens simply could not provide. After some discussion and consultation with his children Janz agreed to enter the Menno Private Hospital. Arrangements were completed and in November, 1963, he was admitted to a private room in the institution. Initially he was optimistic about his hospitalization; perhaps he could regain his vitality.

The Thiessens and Janz arrived at the hospital. An orderly appeared with a wheelchair to receive Janz. As he was driven through the corridors he noticed people with severe aging disabilities, including some with obvious mental degeneration.

Suddenly he understood the reality of his hospitalization. He, Janz, still strong in mind but frail in body, was now institutionalized with other senior citizens, a number of whom were no longer sound of mind. "These people here are all unbalanced," he exclaimed to his children. "I want to leave."<sup>4</sup> That was impossible. Feelings of humiliation overwhelmed him. "Yes, sister Anna, I know where I am," he remarked to the head nurse not long after his admittance.<sup>5</sup>

The Menno Private Hospital was under the auspices of the General Conference of Mennonites. In some ways it seemed appropriate that Janz, who had always worked closely with the General Conference, should be cared for by his "other" brethren. The hospital administration provided a private room and proved most accommodating in making Janz's stay as pleasant as possible. Physical suffering had unfortunately taken its toll. The 1945 advocate of Mennonite cooperation in relief matters and the 1947 reconciler of his people in Paraguay was no longer capable of emulating his former stature. Now in old age he felt separated from his own Conference and his own brethren; now when he had totally lost his independence the "other" brethren had to care for him! Janz became morose and remained in the privacy of his own room, avoiding Sunday services and even communion. Perhaps such withdrawal was appropriate. This after all was his last private battle.

When Janz first entered hospital, he met the nursing supervisor, Anna Regehr, whom he had known as head nurse at the Coaldale hospital. "Well, sister Anna," he remarked, "we are two determined people. I wonder who will win?"<sup>6</sup> Janz proved the more stubborn of the two. Certainly he resisted hospital rules and procedures. Which independent man would not? It was so distasteful to be bathed and ordered about by others. The basic reason for his contentiousness lay elsewhere. Like Job of old, Janz felt he "had stayed in God's paths" and had "not refused his commandments."<sup>7</sup> Could not God spare him this last suffering?<sup>8</sup> Was he not entitled to this one exemption? Friends like C.A. DeFehr and J.J. Thiessen continued in active service. Why not he?<sup>9</sup> Cut off from the active world he loved so much! In the varied crises of his life he always managed to reassert his faith in God's leading, but why the lonely confinement in old age? On one occasion when Henry Thiessen read the story of John the Baptist's

imprisonment Janz responded with an impatient, "That's my situation exactly!"<sup>10</sup>

If only he could live a few more years and finish his work! He spoke of this hope to his children and friends. For a time even his doctor believed that his determination to finish his book might revive his ailing body. At one point Janz wondered if anointment with oil and special prayer might not restore him. God surely understood that it was not quite time for Janz to die. As hard as he tried, he failed to surmount his bodily frailty. In the face of incredible odds, he sustained hope for betterment.

"Do I have my clothes here?" he asked Helen one day.

"Why yes," she replied.

"Bring them. I want to get dressed!"

During the last eight months of his life Janz endured acute suffering. Slowly but inevitably his bodily disintegration progressed. His intense concern about an extension of life diminished. He struggled to sustain faith and endure his physical pain. Frequently he found comfort in the Scriptures, which he knew so well and readily quoted. "Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed. I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you." Not only did his children hear him recite Isaiah 41:10 but Isaiah 50:10 as well. Again and again he found solace in the prayers and Bible readings of the selected visitors he received. He was able to leave the hospital on two occasions: he celebrated Christmas with the Thiessens on December 26th and participated fully in the festivities until late evening, yet he next day "... Father was very, very ill."<sup>11</sup> Janz was also present at the Thiessens's silver wedding, but again the experience was a strenuous one.

Janz's youngest sister Helena visited him in late January, 1964. "I was shocked," she wrote, "how ill and thin my brother was. I thought he might die while I was still there."<sup>12</sup> In early April an old friend from Coaldale, Bernhard J. Dick, visited Janz on three separate occasions. He reported:

A month ago brother Janz may have thought of recovery, but not now. Sister Anna Regehr, his nurse, with whom I visited several times, has given up hope, as has his daughter Helen. . . . Each time I visited him he had a cold compress on his head to ease his severe headaches. . . . The last time I visited him was in the evening. Helen was also there. How Janz feared the coming night. Again and

again he complains, "I'm so hot." We three prayed together. How his childlike plea distressed me. "Oh my dear, dear Lord, please help me this night!" When visiting hours ended I embraced him, probably for the last time in this life.<sup>13</sup>

On July 28 his daughter Mary wrote:

We, together with Helen and Henry, visited father on Sunday. He was quite well but did not wish to utilize the wheelchair. Jake read from the Scriptures and prayed. Father prayed also. It was a heartfelt prayer and refreshed my soul. Yesterday we came again. . . . When the nurse came to give him his pills Jake and I raised him. How he groaned in agony! . . . Aunt Helena, he is much sicker than when you were here.<sup>14</sup>

In the weeks which followed Janz's condition worsened. His feverish condition persisted, as did the severe headaches. As his last strength dissipated his inward struggle intensified. Helplessly the children watched their father fight his last battle. His inner agony was so readily apparent. Janz's daughters often sang the old songs of faith he knew so well, while his sons-in-law read from the Scriptures. Each time he seemed comforted and restored. By late August everyone felt death was imminent, yet Janz lingered on. He was fully conscious of his steady deterioration. The hospital had robbed him of his personal dignity and independence, now the sickbed deprived him of his remaining mental and physical capacities. Janz's life had been full and eventful and there was little to regret, but he had not counted on wasting away, on a lingering death which literally shrivelled him before he was in the grave, and left only a fraction of the man he had been. There were moments of deep despair and moments when, like Job of old, he triumphantly asserted confidence in his Redeemer. The drawn out struggle ended on October 20, 1964 at 1:30 A.M.

## Epilogue

B.B. Janz always stood within a community. Seen from his viewpoint this community comprised two facets. For generations his forefathers had lived, worked and worshipped in closed settlements. They became a people. As a people they were also heirs to an Anabaptist heritage which saw the church as a group of believers voluntarily joining together for worship and fellowship. Janz's view of community distinguished between the two segments, but one group never excluded the other. He served both with equal zeal. Regardless of where he stood his presence was always commanding. Surviving minutes and letters, as well as the testimony of his co-workers, make this abundantly clear. His leadership qualities were obvious, whether as a conference delegate, committee member or chairman. At one North American conference a U.S. delegate warned his friends, "You know that man who sits towards the back and holds his head in his hands like this—watch him!"<sup>1</sup> When Janz expressed his views he was obviously persuasive and wielded widespread influence.

Janz's contribution in the context of the Russian Mennonite world was singularly related to the emigration from Russia. It was the largest Mennonite migration of the early twentieth century. The demands the movement placed on Janz were as exacting as they were confusing. In the early years of the *Verband* there was little factual data on which to make policy decisions. The Mennonites in Canada needed time to organize and plan while the Russian emigrants had to leave as soon as possible. The situation demanded diplomatic intuition and a sense of daring. It needed a man totally committed to emigration as the only alternative for Russian Mennonitism. Janz was such a man. The letters which he sent abroad consistently affirmed his pessimism regarding a future in Russia. It was with this conviction that he set about establishing both an ideological and technical base for a Mennonite exodus.

Having once decided on a course of action nothing deterred him. The badgering of Soviet government officials with little

thought as to personal safety; the persistent appeals to the North American Mennonites for quick action; the criticism of a constituency unable to appreciate the complexity of the problems he faced; long hours of clerical labor because he lacked a secretary—all these were necessary means to an end. The Mennonites must leave Russia, regardless of the cost.

Once in Canada Janz exercised a discernable influence on both the General Conference and Mennonite Brethren constituencies. Initially the Brethren in Canada traced their origins to Manitoba, where evangelistic thrusts by U.S. itinerant ministers late in the nineteenth century led to the formation of the first church in 1888. Subsequent immigration to Saskatchewan permanently established the group in Canada. Until the coming of the Russian Mennonites in the 1920's the rather fundamentalist theology of the U.S. Brethren exercised a strong influence upon its Canadian counterpart. When Janz and his fellow Russian Mennonites arrived in Canada, they brought with them certain perspectives capable of exerting needed counter-pressures in the evolution of Mennonite Brethren theology.

With Janz's arrival a voice with practical experience in the application of pacifism was heard on the Canadian Mennonite scene. The Russian Mennonite experiences with the state, civil war and anarchy were injected into the Canadian as well as the North American scene. Here was a non-resistance tested on the Russian battlefields of World War I and amid the internal violence which followed. It was not surprising that Janz saw pacifism in Canada as too negative, too concerned with historic privilege and the protection of law. What he had seen in Russia convinced him that nonresistance in Canada was ill-prepared for the pressures of war. In the early 1930's he already stressed the necessity of formulating conference resolutions on nonresistance, of instructing the young people in the teaching, of dialogue with government on the question.

Perhaps war came too soon, perhaps his voice was not heard or his pleas ignored by a self-satisfied constituency. During World War II some fifty per cent of the young men in his denomination joined the active forces. Disregard for a principle did not invalidate it. Nonresistance was applicable amid the realities of war and needed to vindicate itself by useful public action. Mennonites must bind up the wounded and perform works of charity. Let noncombant Mennonite medics be at the front! In Janz's opinion the forestry camps

which the government finally established restricted the expression of the peace principle too severely.

Janz was a latecomer to the Mennonite Brethren. Religiously he found new life as a mature young man. Within the ethnocentric community which gave him birth and early nurture he still found it necessary to engage in a drawn-out inner struggle. He searched for those within the community who understood his "salvation by faith" pilgrimage. He found a responsive community in the Mennonite Brethren and served them for the rest of his life with the zealotry of a convert.

Janz's views on the nature of the church lay deep within the realm of his own experience. Somewhat like Menno Simons or Conrad Grebel, Janz saw the limitations of the parish church (*Volkskirche*) and searched for an alternative. The old religious structure had not offered him new life. The true church must be free, a voluntary fellowship of disciples, deriving its nurture and discipline from the Scripture. This vision remained with Janz for life. In 1954 he addressed the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren delegates assembled in Virgil, Ontario. It was the last time he spoke to his denomination, the last time he was able to express his deepest concerns to them. "When the Mennonite Brethren Church was founded on January 6, 1860, one did not know for certain of the forgiveness of sin, of the assurance of salvation, of one's acceptance as a child of God. The great gifts of salvation were obscured through orthodoxy and tradition. . . . Everything was *Volkskirche*, all were included. There was no believer's church."<sup>2</sup>

The small group of 1860 prospered spiritually and added to its numbers, he reminded the delegates. The Brethren now possessed beautiful churches, large Sunday schools, excellent choirs, a number of private schools. Amid all this glitter, was the inner core of the church still healthy? Janz expressed deep apprehension. What of brethren "who appear so decent, speak really pious words, attend the Lord's Supper, church services, business meetings? But there is no power, no victory, no blessing, no Christian influence. It is all pretense and hypocrisy."<sup>3</sup> Janz wondered if such unspiritual brethren might gain the upper hand in the church.

And what of those who, according to Titus 1:16, professed to acknowledge God, but denied him by their actions. "Oh yes, there is a lovely confession, and so he must be a good brother. The voice is that of 'Jacob, but the hands are those of Esau. . .

Do we know how far these people have torn down the banner of the Mennonite Brethren Church?"<sup>4</sup>

There was one additional concern: "The world is not coming into the church first and foremost, members are rather going out into the world and then bringing it in. Oh how much unfaithfulness and denial occurs in the area."<sup>5</sup> Janz made a final appeal.

In less than 100 years, oh Mennonite Brethren Church, you have become so feeble in your practical life and conduct. You have such a very lovely, completely apostolic confession, a (to overstate) magnificent organization, more and more form. (Inner) life is waning, although the heart, thank God, is still healthy. . . . Oh that general revival, repentance and cleansing permeate our congregations! Oh, that we are naturally poorer and spiritually richer! Oh that the steps be washed from the very top to the very bottom. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

Janz never tired of speaking of the new life, of its application in the life of the believer, of the need for vital spiritual processes within the congregation. This was for him the essence of the believer's church.<sup>7</sup>

Even Janz's closest acquaintances were generally unaware of his wide-ranging correspondence. Here was pastoral care and inter-Mennonite dialogue at its best. Here was also honesty, understanding, admonition and correction. Janz was a pastor's pastor. Ministers and church leaders in Canada, the United States, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, received his letters and wrote back. Conference leaders, editors, evangelists, college presidents, MCC directors, were also on his mailing list. Each letter was personally typed or written, dealt with a situation unique to the recipient, and usually demanded a personal response.

There was a touch of the caustic for the haughty, the unvarnished truth for the bureaucrat and gentle love for the fallen and embittered. There was an insistence that wrong be made right, that hostility give way to unity, that harsh judgements be retracted. Like a father confessor he assured the penitent of God's love and forgiveness or pledged further dialogue with those of opposing views. His correspondents felt free to confide their innermost problems and confess their secret sins. The response in his letters was always consistent. Shortcomings were never excused, but the brother so afflicted



was never isolated or rejected. Janz differentiated the sin from the sinner.

Even during his most active years Janz was a man between cultures. The Canadian environment gradually made him obsolete. He understood that process and in his letters often anticipated it. When it came it was difficult to accept. Redundancy was the real struggle of his old age. Many roles had been thrust upon him: *Verband* chairman; leader of the largest and most influential Brethren congregation west of Winnipeg; district representative for settlement concerns; member of the Canadian Board of Colonization; member of *Dienst am Evangelium* and a variety of other conference committees; a leading spokesman for nonresistance in Western Canada; a persistent voice for Canadian concerns in Mennonite Central Committee meetings; chairman of the Alberta Education Society. His was an influential voice whose criticisms and recommendations could not be taken lightly. Little wonder that Janz genuinely loved this life and was reluctant to depart.

Being an honest man Janz could not hide those feelings. In death there were no heroic gestures, no grandiose scenes, no eloquent dialogues or soliloquies. In life Janz had been statesman, counselor, a shepherd to his flock. He found himself in the very center of community life almost like a high priest in ancient Israel. Ever since his *Verband* leadership in Russia the Mennonite world came to Janz. In some ways, as a leader of men and a spiritual father, he was a high priest. Inevitably the frailties of old age reduced all images of Janz as high priest to myth. Neither Janz himself nor his constituency understood the subtlety of this process.

Heroism by its very definition only occurs in one setting and at one time. Attitudes and actions in the prime of life were not transferable to dying, especially if dying was a protracted process lasting a decade. The Janz of the 1920's, the nonresistant Janz of World War II, the Paraguayan peacemaker of 1947, was no longer there in 1960. He had to accept the fact that God, whom he had served so zealously for decades, now asked him to suffer patiently and waste away. That was difficult.

### *ABBREVIATIONS*

- BA — Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council (formerly  
the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization).
- DA — C. A. DeFehr Collection
- FA — A. A. Friesen Collection
- JA — B. B. Janz Collection
- JBJC — J.B. Janz Collection
- MBA — Mennonite Brethren Archives

## Notes

Several major archival collections proved indispensable to this study. The A.A. Friesen Collection (Mennonite Historical Library, North Newton, Kansas) provided the most important sources for B. B. Janz's *Verband* activities in Russia. The compilations of J.B. Janz of Coaldale, Alberta, contained valuable information on family genealogy and history. Several interviews with J.B. Janz before his death in 1975 contributed to a better understanding and interpretation of the materials he collected. Important materials for Janz's life in Russia also came from the archive of the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council '(Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba).

Three additional collections supplied the major information on Janz's career in Canada. His own papers, containing most of his correspondence since 1927, were naturally of critical importance to this book. A.A. Wiens of Abbotsford, British Columbia, sorted the collection into over one hundred volumes shortly before his death. The Janz archive is housed in the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba, as is a second significant collection, that of C.A. DeFehr. Janz's correspondence with DeFehr often provided personal perspectives not found elsewhere. The archive of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America (Hiebert Library, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California) provided the necessary minutes of both the conferences and the conference committees in which Janz participated. The minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, which Janz led for over twenty years, gave me entry to a segment of his world not accessible elsewhere. Personally, I deeply appreciated the congregation's generosity in making them available.

### CHAPTER 1

1. While still in Russia Jacob B. Janz, the younger brother of B. B. Janz, made extensive inquiries into his own family background. The historical and genealogical notes he compiled represent the only

surviving written source on the subject. The material is in the possession of his daughter, Helen Janz, of Coaldale, Alberta. A second manuscript left by J. B. Janz is entitled "Benjamin B. Janz. Aufzeichnungen seines leiblichen Bruders Jacob B. Janz." It is a short biography of B. B. Janz, touching upon the highpoints of his career. Cited hereafter as *Aufzeichnungen*.

2. Notes, 8-33.

3. Notes, Genealogical Section.

4. Interview with J. B. Janz, Coaldale, Alberta, May 27, 1972.

5. A short autobiographical sketch, *Meine Heimkehr*, was included in the memoirs of B. B. Janz. It is the best source of information on Janz's home and childhood. *Heimkehr*, 1-2.

6. JA, *Heimkehr*, 2-3. The sermons of Ludwig Hofacker enjoyed a wide circulation in the Molotschna settlement during the second half of the nineteenth century. In many homes they were used on special religious holidays and Sundays, while in some villages they were read from the pulpit. They exercised considerable influence in the evangelical renewal movements associated with the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

7. JBJC, *Aufzeichnungen*, 1.

8. JA, *Heimkehr*, 4-5.

## CHAPTER II

1. JA, *Heimkehr*, 6.

2. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

3. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

4. *Ibid.*, 10.

5. Glaube einfach jeden Tag  
Glaube ob's auch stuermen mag  
Glaub' erst recht auf dunkler Spur,  
Jesus spricht ja: Glaube nur!  
*Frohe Botschaft*, No. 104. Translation from *Mennonite Brethren Church Hymnal* (Hillsboro, Kansas, 1963), No. 430.

6. JA, *Heimkehr*, 13-14.

7. JBJC, Mrs. M. Toews (nee Janz), "Als mein Bruder getauft wurde."

8. *Ibid.*

9. JA, Memoirs, "Grundzuege im Charakter der Glaubensstellung unserer Vaeter", 8-10.

10. Interview. Mr. und Mrs. H. Thiessen. Clearbrook, B.C. June, 1976.

### CHAPTER III

Some of the material used in this chapter originally appeared in my book, *Lost Fatherland. The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927* (Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa., 1967). I wish to thank Herald Press for its kind permission to reprint several excerpts.

1. JA, I, c. "Die Gruendung des Verbandes in Alexanderwohl," 1, 2.

2. G. G. Thielman, "The Mennonite 'Selbstschutz' in the Ukraine during the Revolution," *The New Review. A Journal of East-European History*, X (March, 1970), 50-60; J. B. Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine (1918-1919)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XLVI (January, 1972), 5-40.

3. JA, I, c. "Die Gruendung des Verbandes in Alexanderwohl," 3, 4.

4. FA, B. B. Janz to B. H. Unruh, Kharkov, Nov. 20, 1921.

5. See JA, Memoirs, "Wieder das Statut". FA. B. B. Janz to B. H. Unruh, Kharkov, April 27, 1922.

6. FA, B. B. Janz to the Dutch and American Mennonite Relief Organizations. Ohrloff, December 23, 1921.

7. *Ibid.*

8. FA, B. B. Janz to B. H. Unruh. Kharkov, February 18, 1922.

9. FA, B. B. Janz to the Study Commission (*Studienkommission*) Kharkov, March 1, 1922.

10. FA, B. B. Janz to the *Stdk.* Kharkov, March 7, 1922.

11. FA, B. B. Janz to B. H. Unruh. Kharkov, March 12, 1922.

12. FA, Bittgesuch an das All-Ukrainische Zentrale Executiv Komitee, December 17, 1921.

13. JA, Memoirs, "Wieder das Statut."

14. H. H. Kornelsen, "Wie kleine Begebenheiten und Ereignisse mitwirkten, dass es anno 1923 zu einer grossen Auswanderung der Mennoniten kam" (ms. in the possession of the author), 11.

15. JA, Memoirs, "Wieder das Statut," 7.
16. *Ibid.*, 7, 8.
17. Kornelsen, 6.
18. "Wo findet die Seele die Heimat, die Ruh? Nein! Hier ist sie nicht." FA, B. B. Janz to the Mennonite Conferences and Organizations in America. Moscow, December 21, 1922 and January 1, 1923, 7.
19. FA, B B Janz to the *Stdk.* Moscow, December 16, 1922, 7.
20. BA, B. B. Janz to the CMBC. August 4, 1922, 2.
21. FA, B. B. Janz to A. A. Friesen. May 27, 1922.
22. *Ibid.*
23. FA, B. B. Janz to the Mennonite Conferences and Organizations in America. Moscow, December 21, 1922, and January 1, 1923, 7.
24. J. J. Thiessen, "Vor 40 Jahren". Saskatoon, Sask., June 1964 (ms. in possession of J. J. Thiessen), 1, 2.
25. Minutes of the "Gedenk-Feier am 23. Januar 1945 im Bethause der Coaldale Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde," (ms. in possession of the author).

#### CHAPTER IV

Some of the material used in this chapter originally appeared in my book, *Lost Fatherland. The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927* (Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa., 1967). I wish to thank Herald Press for its kind permission to reprint several excerpts.

1. FA, B. B. Janz to the Mennonite Colonization Association of North America. Kharkov, Jan. 22, 1923.
2. *Ibid.*
3. FA, B. B. Janz to the *Stdk.* March 29, 1923, 3.
4. FA, B. B. Janz to the *Stdk.* April 16, 1923, 8.
5. FA, B. B. Janz to the *Stdk.* Moscow, July 1-4, 1923.
6. BA, B. B. Janz to the American Mennonite Committee for Colonization, July 23, 1923, 5.
7. FA, B. B. Janz to the *Stdk.* Moscow, July 1-4, 1923, 6, 7.

8. FA, B. B. Janz to the Emigration Committees in America. Kharkov, Dec. 22, 1923.
9. FA, B. B. Janz to B. H. Unruh. Moscow, Dec. 18, 1923.
10. JA, Memoirs, B. B. Janz, "Soldaten und Kassenpassagiere."
11. *Ibid.*
12. FA, B. B. Janz to the American Emigration Committees. Kharkov, Feb. 14, 1924, 1.

## CHAPTER V

Some of the material used in this chapter originally appeared in my book, *Lost Fatherland. The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927* (Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa., 1967). I wish to thank Herald Press for its kind permission to reprint several excerpts.

1. JA, Memoirs, "Eine Mai-Feier im Sovietlande."
2. J. J. Thiessen, "Vor 40 Jahren," Saskatoon, Sask., June 1964 (ms. in possession of J. J. Thiessen). 1, 2.
3. Interview with B. B. Janz. August, 1963.
4. JA, Memoirs, "Eine Mai-Feier im Sovietlande," 9.
5. FA, B. B. Janz to B. H. Unruh and A. A. Friesen. Moscow, June 27, 1924.
6. *Ibid.*
7. FA, B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Moscow, Aug. 31 to Sept. 5, 1924; BA, B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Orloff, Oct. 7, 1924.
8. BA, B. B. Janz to the American Colonization Committees. Kharkov, July 19, 1924.
9. FA, B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Kharkov, August 14, 1924.
10. FA, Marginal notation by B. H. Unruh on B. B. Janz's letter to D. Toews. October 31, 1924.
11. FA, B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Kharkov, August 8, 1924, 3.
12. BA, B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Moscow, November 24, 1925.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

15. The record of this interview can be found in both the Friesen and Janz records under the title *Aktenvermerk*, June 16, 1926. Unruh apparently compiled the material from letters received from B. B. Janz.

16. From original notes compiled by Jacob Hein of Tiege and published in A. A. Toews, *Mennonitische Maertyrer* (Winnipeg, 1954), II, 484-87.

17. JA, 102, XI, d. B. B. Janz to G. Duerksen, Wernigerode, July 9, 1926.

#### CHAPTER VI

1. JA, 102, XI, d. B. B. Janz to "Teure Geschwister." Berlin, June 28, 1926.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. JBJC, H. Janz to "Liebe Kinder." October 9, 1926.

5. JBJC, H. Janz to "Liebe Kinder." July 8, 1927.

6. JA, 102, XI, d. B. B. Janz to G. Duerksen. September 13, 1926.

7. JA, 102, XI, d. B. B. Janz to the Department of Immigration and Colonization. May 27, 1927.

8. JA, 102, XI, d. B. B. Janz to "all my loved ones." July 25, 1927.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. JA, 102, XI, d. B. B. Janz to J. B. Janz. September 1, 1927.

12. Interview. Mrs. Helena Toews. July 6, 1974. See also JA, 11, 23, g, B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. February 24, 1928.

13. BA, (1930-46), B. B. Janz to David Toews. January 15, 1932.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. JBJC, "Proceedings of an Inquest held before J. W. McNicol, Esq. . . . at the City Police Court, in the City of Lethbridge . . . this 9th day of January, A.D. 1932 upon the body of Benjamin Janz," 4.



17. JBJC, J. B. Janz, "Der ploetzliche Tod meines Vaters B. B. Janz Sr."
18. JBJC, H. Janz to "Liebe Kinder." October 21, 1926.
19. JBJC, H. Janz to "Liebe Kinder." December 10, 1926.
20. JBJC, H. Janz to "Liebe Kinder." April 9, 1927.
21. JBJC, H. Janz to "Liebe Kinder." June 27, 1927.

## CHAPTER VII

1. Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, "Protokoll am 23 Mai 1926—aus den verschiedenen Gemeinden Russlands hergezogenen—Mitglieder der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde zwecks Organisierung einer Gemeinde."
2. "Bruderberatung der Coaldaler Bruedergemeinde am 27. Dezember 1927." I, 8.
3. "Beratung der MB Gemeinde zu Coaldale am 16. Sept. 1928." 16.
4. "Beratung am 31. September, 1928."
5. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung am 10. Dezember 1930."
6. *Ibid.*
7. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 27. Dezember 1932." I, 216-17.
8. *Ibid.*, 218.
9. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung am 10. Dezember 1930." I, 75.
10. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 27. Dezember 1932." I, 216.
11. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 27. Dezember 1931." I, 131ff.
12. *Ibid.*, 136.
13. *Ibid.*, 137.
14. *Ibid.*, 138.
15. *Ibid.*, 138.
16. *Ibid.*, 139.

17. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 28. Dezember 1933." II, 27.
18. *Ibid.*, 27ff.
19. *Ibid.*, 34.
20. *Ibid.*, 31.
21. *Ibid.*, 35.
22. *Ibid.*
23. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 29. Dezember 1933." II, 41-42.
24. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 28. Dezember 1934." II, 104.
25. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 9. February 1935." II, 112.
26. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 9. Maerz 1935." II, 117.
27. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 27. Januar 1936." II, 180.
28. "Protokoll der Bruderberatung am 27. Dezember 1937." II, 276.
29. *Ibid.*
30. "Protokoll der Bruderberatung am 25. September 1938." III, 9, 10.
31. *Ibid.*, 10.
32. "Protokoll der Gemeinde-Jahresberatung am 27. Dezember 1939." III, 64-65.
33. *Ibid.*, 70.
34. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 14. April 1941." III, 168.
35. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 18. Dezember 1941." III, 182-183.
36. "Protokoll der Gemeinde-Jahresberatung vom 27. Dezember 1939." III, 65.
37. *Ibid.*, 64.
38. B. B. Janz, "Canadian Mennonites Loyal to New Fatherland," *Lethbridge Herald*, (June 1, 1940), 14.
39. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 1. September 1940." III, 119.

40. "Protokoll der Jahressitzung am 27. Dezember 1940." III, 135-136.
41. "Protokoll der Gemeindeberatung vom 19. September 1940." III, 220.
43. "Protokoll der Bruderberatung am 26. Oktober 1939." III, 56.
44. Interview. B. J. Dick and J. Wall, Coaldale, Alberta, July 25, 1976.
45. *Ibid.*
46. All these situations are cited again and again in the minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church.

### CHAPTER VIII

1. JA, Memoirs, "Grundzuege im Charakter der Glaubensstellung unserer Vaeter," 8-10.
2. *Ibid.*
3. DA, BBJ (1954). B. B. Janz to H. Legiehn. August 6, 1954.
4. DA, BBJ (1954). B. B. Janz to the Mennonite Brethren Churches in South America. October 7, 1954.
5. DA, BBJ (1954). B. B. Janz to P. C. Hiebert. May 31, 1954.
6. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to J. Warkentin. July 21, 1952.
7. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to G. Balzer. April 12, 1951.
8. DA, "Kanadische Konferenz (1955)." "Ein Gutachten zu dem projektierten Handbuechlein fuer Prediger in Sued Amerika."
9. *Ibid.*
10. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to G. Balzer — Nachtrag. May 16, 1951.
11. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to F. Janzen. August 7, 1952.  
DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to K. Voth. June 9, 1952.
13. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to the MB Church in Rueckenau, Friesland. October 24, 1952.
14. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Toews. August 19, 1952.
15. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to F. C. Peters. July 25, 1952.

16. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to T. Foth. July 21, 1952.
17. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to A. E. Janzen. May 22, 1952.
18. BA, B. B. Janz to A. A. Friesen. November 17, 1924.
19. DA, "Persoenliches (1956-59)." B. B. Janz to \_\_\_\_\_. February 6, 1958.
20. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to \_\_\_\_\_. September 11, 1950.
21. DA, "Kanadische Konferenz (1955)." B. B. Janz to \_\_\_\_\_. February 28, 1955.
22. DA, "D am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to \_\_\_\_\_. June 27, 1951.
23. DA, "Korrespondenz (1954)." B. B. Janz to Mrs. G. Penner. June 17, 1954.
24. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Toews. August 19, 1952.
25. DA, "Kanadische Konferenz (1955)." B. B. Janz to C. C. Peters. February 4, 1955.
26. DA, "Kanadische Konferenz (1955)."
27. DA, "Kanadische Konferenz (1955)." B. B. Janz to C. C. Peters. January 28, 1955.
28. JA, V, 45, a. B. B. Janz to G. B. Huebert, April 25, 1943.
29. JA, V, 45, a. B. B. Janz to G. B. Huebert. April 25, 1943.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Interview. H. R. Baerg. Fresno, Calif., May 3, 1975.
33. *Ibid.*
34. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to Wm. Loewen. November 28, 1951.
35. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to G. H. Rosenfeld. December 22, 1951.
35. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to G. H. Rosenfeld. December 22, 1951.

36. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to T. Foth. October 22, 1951.
37. DA, "B. B. Janz." B. B. Janz to T. Foth. April 30, 1954.

### CHAPTER IX

1. The best detailed treatment of National Socialism in Canada can be found in F. H. Epp, *An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Minnesota, 1965). For a good summary of the problem see F. H. Epp, "Kanadische Mennoniten, das Dritte Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg," *Menmonitische Geschichtsblaetter*, Vol. 31, N.F. 26 (1974), 91-102.
2. W. Quiring, "Bankrott der Wehrlosigkeit," *Der Bote*, XI, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1934); H. Schroeder, "Tuempling, Hamburg, Saale, Deutschland," *Der Bote*, XI, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1934). Some months earlier a sharply worded pro-Nazi article [W. Quiring, "Im fremden Schlepptau," *Der Bote*, XI, No. 36 (Sept. 5, 1934)] caused Janz to remind the author that if one sought "... brothers, one speaks brotherly." B. B. Janz, "Warum schlaegst Du Deinen Naechsten?", *Der Bote*, XI, No. 38 (Sept. 19, 1934).
3. *Der Bote*, XI, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1934), 2.
4. B. B. Janz, "Kommt Menno Simonis unter die Nationalsozialisten?", *Der Bote*, XI, No. 52 (Dec. 26, 1934).
5. *Ibid.*
6. "Siehst du das Schwert kommen?", *Der Bote*, XV, No. 8 (Feb. 23, 1938), No. 9 (March 2, 1938).
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. JA, Memoirs. "Woher und Wohin. Streiflichter aus der mennonitischen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft." All references are from this manuscript.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. A specific reference to an article in *Der Bote*, XI, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1934).
14. *Der Bote*, XI, No. 52 (Dec. 26, 1934).

15. Reference to H. Schroeder, "Tuempling, Hamburg, Saale, Deutschland," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, Vol. 57, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1934).
16. "Woher und Wohin," 3, 4.
17. The rally, held early in 1939, was attended by many Mennonites. Janz viewed this as utter folly. ". . . These people are openly demonstrating, they have taken up a fighting stance. . . . If war should come, mass agitation will grow into mass anger and bring serious consequences for us." JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Feb. 6, 1919.
18. "Woher und Wohin." 10, 11.
19. *Ibid.*, 14.
20. *Ibid.*, 16, 17.
21. *Ibid.*, 18, 19.
22. *Ibid.*, 19, 20.
23. *Ibid.*, 20.
24. *Ibid.*, 22.
25. *Ibid.*, 23.
26. *Ibid.*, 38.
27. *Ibid.*, 23.
28. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to H. Wall. Sept. 20, 1952.
29. "Woher und Wohin," 33.
30. Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, "Protokoll der Bruderberatung am 19. Januar 1930." I, 39.
31. *Ibid.*, "Protokoll der Bruderberatung am 27. Dezember 1937." II, 275.
32. *Ibid.*, 277.
33. "Protokoll Nr. 1 der Gruenderversammlung des Mennonitischen Schulvereins von Alberta abgehalten am 8. Maerz 1946."
34. "Protokoll Nr. 12 der 8. Jahresversammlung des Albertaer Mennonitschen Bildungsvereins abgehalten am 9. April, 1954."
35. "Protokoll Nr. 7 der 3. Jahresversammlung des Albertaer Mennonitischen Bildungsvereins abgehalten am 9. Maerz, 1949."

36. "Protokoll Nr. 13 der 9. Jahresversammlung des Albertaer Mennonitischen Bildungsvereins abgehalten am 29, April, 1955."

37. *Ibid.*

38. "Protokoll Nr. 9 der 5. Jahresversammlung des Albertaer Mennonitischen Bildungsvereins abgehalten am 2. April, 1951," 12.

39. JA, V, 49, e. B. B. Janz to J. Quiring. July 10, 1950.

40. JA, V, 49, e. B. B. Janz to J. Quiring. March 21, 1951.

41. JA, V, 49, e. B. B. Janz to J. Quiring. July 10, 1950.

42. Ja, V, 45, a. B. B. Janz to Voth. April 24, 1940; DA "B. B. Janz, 1954." B. B. Janz to H. H. Janzen. June 19, 1954; JA, V, 49, e. B. B. Janz to J. B. Toews. November 12, 1946.

#### CHAPTER X

1. JA, III, d, 30. B. B. Janz to O. O. Miller. June 8, 1935.

2. BA, (1930-46). B. B. Janz, "Vorlage in der Wehrfrage."

3. BA, (1930-46). B. B. Janz to Conference Committee on Nonresistance. October 5, 1936; B. B. Janz to D. Toews. May 27, 1936; also "Vorlage in der Wehrfrage."

4. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. February 6, 1939.

5. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. Coaldale, September 6, 1939.

6. *Ibid.*

7. See D. P. Reimer, *Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Kanada waehrend des zweiten Weltkrieges, 1939-1945* (Steinbach, Man., n.d.).

8. *Ibid.*, 79-88.

9. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. July 17, 1940.

10. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. September 20, 1940.

11. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. October 3, 1940.

12. Founded on July 22, 1940, the Conference included the Amish, the Old Order Mennonites, the Ontario Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church and the United Mennonite Churches of Ontario. Bishop E. J. Swalm served as the first chairman of the Conference.

13. JA, IV, a, 37. Toews, Gerbrandt, Janz und Klassen to T. C. Davis. November 12, 1940.
14. *Ibid.*
15. JA, IV, a, 37. Delegation to T. C. Davis and L. R. LaFlèche. Ottawa, November 13, 1940.
16. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews and J. Gerbrandt. Ottawa, November 15, 1940.
17. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to L. R. La Flèche. November 14, 1940.
18. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to L. R. La Flèche. Ottawa, November 19, 1940.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. JA, IV, a, 37. Delegation to J. G. Gardiner. Ottawa, November 22, 1940. In a later letter to Davis Janz observed: "... I was the only one to emphasize the great work of mercy to the wounded and sick soldiers." JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to T. C. Davis. December 18, 1940.
22. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to T. C. Davis. December 1, 1940.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.* In his reply to Janz Davis noted that "only the government can say, through its proper organizations, whether or not a man can qualify for exemption under the Regulations." JA, V, a, 37. T. C. Davis to B. B. Janz. Ottawa, December 4, 1940.
25. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. December 1, 1940.
26. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to T. C. Davis. December 16, 1940.
27. *Ibid.* B. B. Janz to T. C. Davis. December 18, 1940; B. B. Janz to J. G. Gardiner. December 18, 1940.
28. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to J. G. Gardiner. December 18, 1940.
29. *Ibid.*
30. JA, IV, a, 37. Order-in-Council P. C. 7215 (copy).
31. See J. A. Toews, *Alternative Service in Canada during World War II* (Winnipeg, 1959), 44ff; also Appendix B and C.
32. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to J. G. Gardiner. June 13, 1941.



33. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. June 27, 1941.
34. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to J. T. Thorson. June 28, 1941.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to L. R. La Flèche. July 15, 1941.
38. JA, IV, a, 37. J. H. Sherk, J. B. Martin, David Toews and C. F. Klassen to J. T. Thorson. January 9, 1942.
39. JA, IV, a, 37. "Report of Delegation to Ottawa. January 13, 1943.
40. *Ibid.*
41. JA, IV, a, 37. L. R. La Flèche to B. B. Janz. January 16, 1942.
42. Toews, 53-55.
43. JA, IV, a, 37. B. B. Janz to W. L. Mackenzie King. February 7, 1942.
44. JA, d, 40. H. Dick to B. B. Janz. December 10, 1942.
45. JA, IV, d, 40. J. F. Klassen to B. B. Janz. October 9, 1942.
46. JA, IV, d, 40. P. Boldt to B. B. Janz. n.d.
47. JA, IV, d, 40. J. Dyck to B. B. Janz. Ottawa, August 23, 1941.
48. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to P. P. Dyck. December 7, 1940; H. Dick to B. B. Janz. December 10, 1942.
49. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to P. A. Boldt. June 7, 1945.
50. *Ibid.*
51. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to H. Siemens. October 30, 1942.
52. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to C. Thiessen. November 14, 1945.
53. JA, IV, d, 40. P. J. Klassen to B. B. Janz. November 2, 1943.
54. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to E. Klingenberg. May 29, 1945.
55. See JA, IV, d, 40.
56. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to W. H. Kornelsen. October 24, 1944.
57. See JA, IV, d, 40.

58. *Ibid.*

59. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to R. Bartel. May 13, 1942.

60. *Ibid.*

61. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to P. J. Wiebe. September 24, 1941.

62. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to B. J. Wall. December 7, 1942.

63. JA, IV, d, 40. B. B. Janz to "all my young friends and brothers in Seebe, Alberta." October 14, 1941.

64. JA, IV, d, 40.

## CHAPTER XI

1. BA, "B. B. Janz (1947-52)." Minutes. Western Relief Committee. February 6, 1950.

2. JA, II, g, 23. B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. Coaldale, January 14, 1947.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. JA, II, g, 23. B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. Asuncion, March 11, 1947.

6. BA, "B. B. Janz (1947-52)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. Asuncion, April 1, 1947.

7. An excellent if somewhat partisan account of the National Socialist question in the Paraguayan Mennonite colonies can be found in J. S. Postma, *Fernheim, fernes Heim* (ms. in possession of the Mennonite Library and Archives, N. Newton, Kansas).

8. BA, "B. B. Janz (1947-52)." B. B. Janz to the MB Church in Coaldale." September 14, 1947.

9. *Ibid.*

10. MBA, Mennonite Brethren Board of Reference and Counsel. Minutes (1945 - December, 1949), Vol. I. "Protokoll Nr. 1 der Gemeinde—Versammlung der 3 Bruedergemeinden am 7. September, 1947, abgehalten im Kolonies—Saal zu Philadelphia."

11. *Ibid.*, 1.

12. BA, "B. B. Janz (1947-52)." B. B. Janz to the MB Church in Coaldale." September 14, 1947.

13. *Ibid.* See also MBA, MB Board of Reference and Counsel. Minutes (1945 - December, 1949), Vol. I. "Protokoll Nr. 2 der Gemeinde—Versammlung am 14. September 1947, abgehalten im Lichtfelder Bethause zu Philadelphia."

14. MBA, "Protokoll Nr. 3 der Gemeinde—Versammlung der nun vereinigten Menn. Brudergemeinde Fernheims am Sonntag den 21ten September 1947, im Bethause des bisherigen Lichtfelder Gemeinde zu Philadelphia."

15. *Ibid.*

16. MBA, "Protokoll Nr. 4 der Gemeinde—Versammlung der vereinigten Mennoniten Brudergemeinde Fernheim am Sonntag, den 28. September 1947 im Bethause zu Karlsruhe (Harbinger Ecke).

17. BA, "B. B. Janz (1947-52)." B. B. Janz to the MB Church in Coaldale. September 14, 1947.

18. BA, "B. B. Janz (1947-52)." B. B. Janz to P. C. Hiebert and C. F. Klassen. Asuncion, November 10, 1947. Also, MBA, Board of Reference and Counsel. Minutes (1945 - Dec. 1949). Vol. I. B. B. Janz to P. C. Hiebert. September 29, 1947.

19. BA, Janz to Hiebert and Klassen. November 10, 1947.

## CHAPTER XII

1. Minutes of the "Gedenk-Feier am 23. Januar 1945 im Bethause der Coaldale Mennoniten Brudergemeinde," 9.

2. BA, (1930-46). B. B. Janz to C. F. Klassen. March 13, 1946.

3. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to J. H. Janzen. June 22, 1948.

4. See Chapter IV.

5. JA, "Woher und Wohin. Streiflichter aus der mennonitischen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft." 19, 20.

6. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. February 19, 1927. See also B. B. Janz to CMBC. February 27, 1929.

7. JA, II, d, 17. B. B. Janz to D. Toews. April 7, 1929.

8. DA, "B. B. Janz (1954)." B. B. Janz to C. C. Peters. September 28, 1954.

9. BA, (1930-46). B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. September 3, 1945.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.* For example see one of Toews' reports in "Die siebente Vertreterversammlung der mennonitischen Ansiedler Albertas—Gem am 15. und 16. Juli 1937," pp. 20-26.
12. *Ibid.*
13. BA, (1930-46). J. J. Thiessen to B. B. Janz. September 10, 1945.
14. BA, (1930-46). B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. November 3, 1945. In 1948 the Mennonite Brethren Conference in Canada advocated the dissolution of the Board of Colonization and the transfer of its functions to the respective Boards of Reference and Council. Janz recalled: "I opposed this with all my strength. It would have been terrible to break the emigration bridge from Europe to Canada. . . . In Russia I spent five dangerous years at the head of c. 60,000 Mennonites in the work of rescue and protection. The Lord gave abundant grace. Now, with much experience in toleration and cooperation, I have become old and gray." DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to G. Balzer Nachtrag. May 16, 1951.
15. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to J. H. Janzen. June 22, 1948.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See "Peter Dyck's Story," *Mennonite Life*, III, No. 1 (January, 1948), 8-11.
18. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to J. H. Janzen. June 22, 1948.
19. *Ibid.*
20. JA, III, 33, d. B. B. Janz to C. J. Rempel. December 2, 1948.
21. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. December 16, 1949.
22. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to H. S. Bender. March 20, 1950.
23. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. July 12, 1949.
24. DA, "D. am Ev. (1950)." B. B. Janz to H. H. Janzen. November 28, 1950.
25. JA, III, 30, d. B. B. Janz to O. O. Miller. March 27, 1951.
26. JA, V, 49, e. B. B. Janz to J. A. Toews. February 21, 1949.
27. JA, V, 45, a. B. B. Janz to H. R. Wiens. June 19, 1950.

28. DA, "B. B. Janz (1954)." B. B. Janz to C. J. Rempel. May 25, 1954.
29. *Ibid.*
30. BA, (1947-52). B. B. Janz to H. S. Bender. March 20, 1950.
31. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to P. C. Hiebert. December 13, 1952.
32. DA, "B. B. Janz (1954)." B. B. Janz to W. T. Snyder. October 11, 1954.
33. *Ibid.*
34. JA, III, 30, d. B. B. Janz to O. O. Miller. April 5, 1954.
35. JA, V, 45, a. B. B. Janz to H.R. Wiens. June 19, 1950.
36. DA, "D. am Ev. (1951)." B. B. Janz to W. Loewen. November 28, 1951

### CHAPTER XIII

1. JA, II, 23, g. B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. March 12, 1945.
2. BA, (1930-46). B. B. Janz to D. Toews. September 4, 1945.  
JA, V, 49, c. B. B. Janz to H. Toews. April 26, 1945.
3. JBJC, B. B. Janz, "Heimgang der Schwester B. B. Janz."
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." B. B. Janz to J. H. Peters. April 4, 1963.
7. JBJC, "Gedenk-Feier am 23. Januar Abends im Bethause der Coaldale Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde."
8. DA, "Persoenliches (1956-59)." B. B. Janz to P. C. Hiebert. March 20, 1957.
9. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. September 9, 1959.
10. DA, "B. B. Janz (1960-64)." B. B. Janz to J. H. Peters. April 4, 1963.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Interview. J. J. Thiessen, Saskatoon. January 28, 1976.

13. Interview with Anna Regehr, Clearbrook, British Columbia. December 24, 1975.
14. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to P. C. Hiebert. January 18, 1952.
15. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr and J. J. Thiessen. January 30, 1952.
16. DA, "D. am Ev. (1952)." B. B. Janz to C. F. Klassen. March 13, 1952.
17. *Ibid.*
18. DA, "D. am Ev. (1953)." B. B. Janz to G. H. Sukkau, April 15, 1953. JA, V, 45, a. B. B. Janz to B. J. Braun. March 27, 1953.
19. John 21:18, DA, "D. am Ev. (1953)." B. B. Janz to Wm. Loewen. April 15, 1953.
20. DA, "B. B. Janz (1954)." B. B. Janz to G. H. Sukkau. July 30, 1954.
21. In general see JA, II, 24, h.
22. JA, II, 24, h, J. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. February 1, 1957.
23. DA, "B. B. Janz (1956-57)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. July 22, 1957.
24. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. August 30, 1957.
25. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. September 6, 1957.
26. Year Book of the 47th General Conference of the M.B. Church of North America, 104.
27. *Ibid.*
28. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. December 31, 1957.
29. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. November 22, 1958.
30. "Protokoll und Berichte der 12. Vertreter-Versammlung der Menn. Gemeinden und Gruppen von Alberta." Coaldale, Alberta, am 10. und 11. Dezember, 1958.
31. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. November 22, 1958.
32. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. January 6, 1959.
33. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. May 5, 1959.

34. JA, II, 24, h. "Mein Weihnachtsgruss."
35. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. October 10, 1960.
36. *Ibid.*
37. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. April 8, 1961.
38. *Ibid.*
39. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. June 11, 1961.
40. JA, II, 24, h. B. B. Janz to C. A. DeFehr. July 16, 1962.
41. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen. October 3, 1962.
42. *ibid.*
43. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen and C. A. DeFehr n.d.
44. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." B. B. Janz to J. H. Peters. April 4, 1963.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Janz's memoirs can be found in J. B. Toews, *The Mennonites in Russia, 1917-1930. Selected Documents*. (Winnipeg, 1975), 89-113; 307-321.

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1. DA, "B. B. Janz (1960-64)." B. B. Janz to J. J. Thiessen and C. A. DeFehr. January 23, 1963.
2. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." B. B. Janz to J. H. Peters. April 4, 1963.
3. Private Letter, B. B. Janz to author. July 24, 1963.
4. Interview. Mr. & Mrs. H. Thiessen, Clearbrook, B.C. December 27, 1975.
5. Interview. Anna Regehr, Clearbrook, B.C. December 24, 1975.
6. *Ibid.*
7. The Living Bible (Wheaton, Tyndale Publishers, 1971), Job 23:11, 12.

8. Interview. Mr. & Mrs. H. Thiessen, Clearbrook, B.C. December 24, 1975.
9. Interview. Mr. & Mrs. H. Thiessen, Clearbrook, B.C. December 27, 1975.
10. *Ibid.*
11. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." H. Thiessen to C. A. DeFehr. January 7, 1964.
12. Mrs. Helena Toews to "Liebe Kinder." February 26, 1964 (Letter in possession of the author).
13. DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." B. J. Dick to C. A. DeFehr. April 27, 1964.
14. Letter quoted in DA, "B. B. Janz (1952-64)." Mrs. H. Toews to C. A. DeFehr. August 5, 1964.

### *EPILOGUE*

1. Interview. B. J. Dick and J. Wall, Coaldale, Alberta, July 25, 1976.
2. JA, 98, X, d. "Konferenz-Predigt von B. B. Janz—am 5. Juli 1954 zu Virgil, Ontario.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. On May 27, 1951 the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church celebrated its 25th anniversary. Janz's keynote address stressed what was for him a basic priority. "The size of the congregation or the building as such is not the most important. Rather we are thankful that this congregation, with obvious [spiritual] infirmities, has remained faithful to its confession: personal conversion; baptism only on faith, and a decisive Christian walk." B. B. Janz, "Das Eben-Ezer der M. B. Gemeinde zu Coaldale, Alberta," *Gedenk-und Dankfeier des 25-jaehrigen Bestehens der Coaldale Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde am 27. Mai 1951*, 24.



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